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## THAT LOOSE FLIMSY ORDER:

THE LITTLE WAR MEETS BRITISH MILITARY DISCIPLINE  
IN AMERICA 1755-1781

BY

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B.S., Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 1983

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**To Paula**

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## ABSTRACT

THAT LOOSE FLIMSY ORDER:

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IN AMERICA 1755-1781

by

David E. Parker

University of New Hampshire, May, 1988

The British army has not been given much credit for its ability to fight the "little war" in America during the period 1755-1781. It has been seen as an intransigent follower of the "parade ground" techniques of Frederick the Great's Prussian army. In following these techniques, the British army is supposed to have used formations of tightly arrayed lines of men to do battle in the tree-covered battlefields of the French and Indian War (1755-1760) and the American War for Independence (1775-1783). A corollary to the Frederician methods is the supposed lack of a tradition of the little war in Europe. Old World battles were presumed to have had no irregulars involved and just been carbon-copies of the mock exercises of parades.

Some specialists have correctly pointed out that Europe had a rich tradition of the little war dating to at least as early as 1740 when the Hungarian hussars helped fight against Prussia in Silesia. They also note that in America, the British army created and used

line regiments. But they complain the army had not gone far enough to meet the conditions they found in the New World. They also complain that the limited tradition of the light infantry which did evolve was immediately suppressed in the mid-1780's.

This thesis agrees with the notion that there was a strong European tradition of the little war. It also agrees that special corps were created in America to fight the little war. It goes one large step further. It presents evidence to suggest that the majority of the British army which fought in the American War for Independence fought using open tactics. General Henry Clinton called the new formation, "that loose flimsy order". What is more, a prototype of this method was begun as early as 1759, when General Amherst ordered his troops to use the two-rank line instead of the three-rank line.

The army had evolved too rapidly in America. When it returned to Britain, it was an army of light troops. Thus, the reaction against it at the end of the war was caused by it having gone too far in the direction of the little war — to the detriment of the conventional war. The argument, as earlier had been supposed, did not concern saving or ending light tactics, it concerned returning the army to a proper balance between light tactics and conventional tactics.

## INTRODUCTION

*Victory... was suddenly wrested from [Lieutenant Colonel Banestre Tarleton at the Battle of the Cowpens (1781)] by an unexpected fire from the Continentals.... The King's troops were charging and sustaining [the attack] in that loose, flimsy order which had ever been too much the practice in America.<sup>1</sup>*

General Sir Henry Clinton had accepted command of the British forces in America in 1778 and found "that loose flimsy order" to be the common formation in the army. This open order two-rank line had evolved on campaign in America since the 1750's from the once standard close order three-rank line. Even though he was cool to the flimsy order, Clinton made no move to end the practice. However, he did feel the formation was too unstable to stand up to a determined enemy, particularly if the enemy was well supplied with good cavalry, so he made certain always to support it with a second line of solid troops. The Hessian troops usually played that part as they kept the three-rank line.

In the Spring of 1781 General William Phillips had no Hessian soldiers in Virginia to provide a solid reserve for his 2,000 man detachment. Perhaps with this in mind, Phillips issued instructions that, in retrospect, may be considered the capstone of three

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter Three, note 31.



generations' work to build a new system of tactics. He ordered his men to "practice forming from two to three and to four deep; and that they should be accustomed to charge in all those orders."<sup>2</sup> *Thus his entire contingent could be mobile light infantry or solid shock infantry as needed.*

Although probably not by conscious effort, the British had been looking for a perfectly balanced system that would make the army flexible enough to cope with both the rapid movements of the "little war" and the grinding punishment of the conventional set-piece battle. Early approaches had relied on dividing the army into specialists for the little war or the conventional war. Sometimes provisional units had been raised for the little war such as Roger's Rangers for the French and Indian War in America or Kingston's Light Horse for the 1745 Rebellion in Scotland. Another makeshift effort was the creation of light companies and troops in the heavy infantry and cavalry regiments respectively. This was done in both American and European theaters of the Seven Years' War as a provisional measure but was made official by the addition of a light company to each regiment in the army in 1771-2.

European campaigns knew the little war as an adjunct to the great battles and sieges. The little war in Europe consisted of a whole range of small events such as raids on supply columns, captures of dispatch riders, lootings of villages, harassment of camps, and destruction of detachments. The results of these individual acts usually caused only small pains, but many small hurts could

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter Three, note 47.

eventually incapacitate a great army. The little war has many names and it can be difficult to define it in clear, succinct terms.<sup>3</sup> For our purposes, however, it is enough to say what the little war is not. It is not a great siege and it is not a "large" set-piece battle.<sup>4</sup>

The little war may have been dormant in the first part of the century but it was revived largely because the "Hungarian Queen", Maria Theresa, brought irregular auxiliary troops to Silesia in 1740. Her border auxiliaries had fought a constant savage war with the Ottoman Turks that was more akin to the little war than conventional war. It is possible that by using these skilled raiders to fight in Silesia against Prussia she caused the little war to be revived. In the course of events, the French eventually faced the Hungarians and learned, to their dismay, that they would never again have a quiet night's rest until they too had sufficient irregulars. The Hungarians kept them constantly on guard. So within three years this was done, and the French found turnabout was to be enjoyed as they then had an advantage over the British. And the cycle continued. Britain began to raise special light units such as Kingston's Light Horse.

Then a curious situation arose. The British army was faced by a multi-front war in 1756. In Europe, the allies were relied on to

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<sup>3</sup> In this thesis the little war is considered in the broadest terms. Here, "little war" is interchangeable with "irregular warfare", "skirmish", "*der kleine Krieg*", "*petite guerre*", and "light tactics". It is anything that is not directly a part of a major battle or siege. Thus, the use of a free battalion to soften up a position in a large battle prior to a close assault by regular troops is not a part of the little war. But if those same troops penetrated the enemy lines and destroyed a supply column two days later it would be.

<sup>4</sup> For an example from Chapter Two, Frederick the Great's siege of Olmütz is not of the little war, although the raid on the supply column headed for Olmütz is.

raise irregular forces for the little war and any British efforts in the little war involved modifying regulars. Four chasseur battalions were created in the allied army, one each from Britain, Hanover, Hesse, and Brunswick. The British battalion was raised by drafting men from every battalion in the army. These battalions were regular light infantry — as opposed to irregular light infantry. The difference was that the regulars were trained to fight both the little war and the conventional war with equal skill. They could set an ambush like a jäger or stand in line and deliver a disciplined volley as well as any line battalion.

In America, the same thing happened. Light companies were created to fight the little war. But the nature of combat was different. The difference was more analogous to differing "shades" of a single color, rather than different colors. Little war and conventional battle were both evident, but the little war was more frequent and more "intense". The opportunities to array an army in open country were scarce and the battalions moved too slowly in the dense terrain. So a further evolutionary step was taken in that theater. The line battalions themselves began taking steps toward becoming light infantry. To be light infantry required a certain change in the way the soldier approached his craft. Instead of the usual rapidly delivered volleys of unaimed musketry, the soldier had to be a good shot, capable of picking a target and hitting it. He had to be fleet on the march and able to negotiate obstacles while hunting his enemy. These prerequisites were given constant attention in the line battalions in America. Marksmanship was given first place in

training and the men were even allowed to train with "live" ammunition.

Similar changes may have been made in Europe, but I have not uncovered anything to suggest it was as pronounced as in America. When the next war, the American Revolution, started, veterans from both theaters of the Seven Years' War fought in the Colonies. But the experience and "customary practice" derived from the two different theaters meshed so well in the American War of Independence that almost no mention of a difference is made. General Riedesel, a Brunswick officer with European experience, quite casually remarked early in 1777 that he must teach his troops the "English Method" of combat. Apparently he saw only one. He trained his troops in the exercise known as "sharp shooting".

'As soon as the first line has jumped into the supposed ditch, the command 'fire' is given, when the first line fires, reloads its muskets, gets up out of the ditch, and hides behind a tree, rock, shrub or whatever is at hand, at the same time firing off four cartridges in such a manner that the line is kept as straight as possible. As soon as the first line has fired off the four cartridges, the second line advances and fires off the same number in the same manner. While this is taking place, the woods have been thoroughly ransacked by the sharp shooters who have thus become familiar with every part of it [the woods].<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> William L. Stone, (trans.), *Memoirs, Letters, and Journals of Major General Riedesel*, (hereafter, *Riedesel*), Vol. 1, p. 64. The British generals were enthusiastically pleased with the performance and after it was completed they celebrated with the German general who hosted "a grand dinner, consisting of thirty-six covers and twenty-six dishes in two courses." All that rigorous effort of watching other men run about, jumping over logs and diving into ditches must have considerably fortified their appetites.

The English Method was still evolving during the war of 1775-1783. The army adopted the open order as its standard and continued to rely on marksmanship. Of course, a solid line of close order shock troops was usually kept in reserve in the event of trouble. Tarleton's army had boldly dashed forward at Cowpens without keeping a reserve. That, rather than the use of an open order as such, was Clinton's complaint.

When William Phillips ordered his soldiers in 1781 to train in two, three and four ranks and to be able to use the bayonet in any of the three, he was formally acknowledging that *shock and fire should be learned by every soldier*. The battalion should be capable of changing its order instantly to suit the situation. He advocated adopting what is essentially the *ordre mixte* that was to become the trademark of Napoleon's armies. *Ordre mixte* was a combination of *ordre profond* (shock) and *ordre mince* (firepower). A major controversy in the eighteenth century centered on the question of whether the bayonet-topped musket should be considered primarily a descendant of the pike and therefore a shock weapon or a descendant of the arquebus and therefore a fire weapon.<sup>6</sup> Phillips wanted it to be both.

This thesis challenges today's prevailing historiography of eighteenth century military history. We can divide that

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<sup>6</sup> Robert S. Quimby, *The Background of Napoleonic Warfare: The Theory and Tactics of Eighteenth Century France*, (hereafter, *Background of Napoleonic Warfare*), p. 6.

historiography into three basic categories: the general works of American history, specialized military histories of the American Revolution, and the even more specialized military histories which consider such topics as the "Colonial Experience and European Military Reform at the End of the Eighteenth Century."<sup>7</sup>

The general histories blatantly ignore simple and common facts. They continue to call all colonial militiamen, "minutemen", when only a few were. They insist the British stood calmly and stupidly in square formations to have their lives taken by swarms of squirrel-shooting "Daniel Boones". This situation may be excused because of a lack of attention to detail or a lack of scholarship, but the works of many *military historians* have missed the mark as well. Don Higginbotham, whose work on the American Revolution is otherwise outstanding, apparently missed the entire European history of the little war. He wrote, "The civilian population [facing Burgoyne in New York] gradually changed into a loosely arrayed body of irregulars of the sort unknown in the Old World."<sup>8</sup> But Chapter Two of this thesis demonstrates that there was a rich tradition of the irregular in Europe before a single battalion of British regulars ever fought on American soil.

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Paret, "Colonial Experience and European Military Reform at the End of the Eighteenth Century", *Bulletin of the Institute for Historical Research*, (hereafter, "Colonial Experience", *BIHR*), Vol. 37, 1964, p 53.

<sup>8</sup> See page 40, note 4. Don Higginbotham, *The War for American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice 1763-1789*, (hereafter, *The War for American Independence*), p. 192. Higginbotham also called Braddock's defeat "a case of New World fighting methods prevailing over those of the Old". Don Higginbotham, *Daniel Morgan: Revolutionary Rifleman*, p. 5. This is absolutely wrong. See discussion in Chapter One p. 10, note 1.

There have been a handful of articles written on the the little war in America and its affect on the British army. These are mentioned several times in the thesis. However, a few remarks might prepare the reader to better grasp the difference between this thesis and those articles. Previous work has concentrated only on the efforts to create provisional troops for the little war and complain the efforts did not go far enough. Peter Paret, for instance, thought the British learned essentially nothing from warfare in America, already having seen everything in Europe. He argued that "...an order of battle in two ranks would not necessarily lead to open tactics, just as heavier formations did not necessarily imply rigidity".<sup>9</sup> My thesis, which benefits from new research, contradicts Paret's findings. It emphasises the changes in the *regular line battalions* and finds that in this case, an order of battle in two ranks did lead to open tactics. Beyond that, this thesis suggests the British army went to almost limitless extremes to knit together the formal techniques of the European set-piece battle, the *petite guerre* of the Old World, and the little war of the American rifleman. The result was Clinton's "loose flimsy order".

The British army in the field was not an intransigent institution that blundered its way into losing the colonies because of inappropriate tactics. It was an innovative organization that absorbed new techniques as it faced them. The advent of true light infantry is usually credited to General Sir John Moore who set up a

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<sup>9</sup> Paret, "Colonial Experience", *BIHR*, p. 2.

training camp at Schorncliffe in 1802.<sup>10</sup> But the British army had already introduced light infantry nearly fifty years before. The only thing lacking was a comprehensive regulation for their use. But regulations notwithstanding, their practices were firmly etched in the army's "customary practice".

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<sup>10</sup> J. F. C. Fuller, *Sir John Moore's System of Training*, pp. 36-41.



## Chapter I

This chapter concentrates on the radical adaptations the British army made to uniforms, equipment and tactics in North America during the Seven Years' War. These changes were pursued in order to achieve military success and thus drive the French out of their North American colonies. The first goal of these adaptations was to achieve great mobility in terrain which was heavily intersected by numerous streams, rocks, trees, bushes, steep gullies and other impedimenta. Uniforms were lightened, made more durable by using tougher materials for the leggings or breeches, and tailored to make movement easier. The new clothing made the men able to move more quickly and suffer less fatigue from the exertions of running or marching through rough terrain. The second goal was to make the individual soldier an effective killer. This was done by changing his weapons to better suit a struggle mainly fought in the closeness of the forest. He was trained to be a good marksman — to be able to kill an enemy at a distance who hid behind cover. A few men were given the more accurate, longer ranged rifles which made a good marksman even more deadly. Tomahawks were issued to augment bayonets for hand-to-hand combat and the unwieldy short swords called "hangers" were left in storage.

None of these changes would be of use if tactics were not adapted to take advantage of them. Current drill manuals and regulations called for the men to march, shoot and fight in a formation so tightly arrayed that one man's elbow was in his neighbor's face if he tried to fire. This situation had the advantage of cohesion which made the unit less likely to break apart in action and run from the enemy. Such formations worked well in flat, clear country, but in wooded or uneven ground the tightness could present a problem. It is very difficult to maintain uniformly spaced ranks and files when moving a group of four or five hundred men through such terrain. The spacing would become uneven and the unit completely disjointed as each man had to negotiate obstacles individually and still remain part of the whole. Of course, gaps would appear in the ranks and cause a unit to stop frequently to redress the ranks. This was not a problem if one's opponent had to take the same measures, but if not, he could cause great damage by shooting at the unit as it redressed its ranks.

The solution was a change in tactics. As was noted above, the men had been trained in marksmanship and were dressed in more serviceable clothing. To these improvements was added a more useful formation. The infantry battalions opened their files to leave gaps between the men and paid less attention to keeping the ranks ramrod straight. With these gaps, the unit changed phase from solid to liquid, allowing it to flow around impedimenta, like water through a rocky streambed. Individuals flowed around obstacles, took cover when necessary — giving out an accurate fire all the while. But

unlike the Indian's extreme application of individual tactics, in which every man fought for himself, overall control was maintained by the British officers and teamwork was still essential. Instant obedience to orders and discipline kept the formation elastic, even while it became more fluid. In short, the Europeans applied the methods generally ascribed to the French, Indians and Colonists while maintaining discipline and group cohesion. The American scramble had met European discipline and produced "that loose flimsy order."

But this bucks the popular image that was painted in the very first year of the war by Major General Edward Braddock in his celebrated defeat at the Battle of the Monongahela, 9 July 1755. If anything is remembered of the "lore" of this remote war, Braddock's debacle, the complete destruction of a professional European army at the hands of a collection of Indian warriors, tops the list.<sup>1</sup> It is representative of the image we hold of the blundering efforts of the European soldiers idiotically trying to use the "civilized" methods of the parade ground, close order drill and unaimed volley fire, to

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<sup>1</sup> According to general American histories Braddock was ambushed in the woods by crafty Canadian Coeur de Bois and Indians. They usually claim Braddock mistakenly tried to apply European parade ground tactics to a scenario of guerilla warfare. In fact, he was not ambushed, his tactics were sound, and things might easily have gone in his favor if he had more closely followed *European practises*. His defeat can be attributed to the general inexperience of his men and a few poor choices by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Gage, who commanded the advance guard. For a full and accurate account of the battle see Paul E. Kopperman, *Braddock at the Monongahela*. Concerning the training and preparation of the troops see J. A. Houlding, *Fit for Service: The Training of the British Army 1715 - 1795*. (Hereafter, *Fit for Service*). For a more extensive argument concerning the use of European tactics in this campaign see Dave Parker, "Braddock's Defeat -- July 9, 1755," *The Courier*, Vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 15-22.

defeat an enemy he could rarely see, could never outmaneuver, and could hardly hurt.

This ridiculous situation of enduring defeat after defeat, born because of a continued, stubborn application of inappropriate methods, is considered to have been the norm for the duration of the war. Even the army's two war-winning victories, the siege of Louisbourg and Wolfe's success on the Plains of Abraham, support this view. On the surface, both battles were set piece actions like those fought by Marlborough or Cumberland in Europe, the first a siege and the second a linear battle of opposed firing lines. Famous victories and ignominious defeats are important, but we cannot ignore the less famous events of the six-year conflict and still gain a clear understanding of its true nature. In fact, a detailed account can only demonstrate that rather than being stubbornly resistant to change, from the first the army willingly and even enthusiastically made extensive changes in all aspects of the way it conducted war. If we replace the images of an old, tired blundering army with a more accurate image of an army dominated by young men who drove it to all lengths to try new ideas and adapt old ideas to new situations, then our understanding of the British army as an institution must also change.

Young men dominated this army in America even while old heads might have held the positions of power in the army at times. No one can deny that Brigadier General Lord George Augustus Viscount Howe, his younger brother Lieutenant Colonel (later Major

General Sir) William Howe,<sup>2</sup> Lieutenant General Jeffery Amherst, and Major General James Wolfe rose to dominate the army in America. They represented its spirit. They advanced ideas which ultimately were responsible for victory. These alterations and adaptations made in the field fall into three main categories involving: reworking of the methods, formations and training of existing military units; creation of provisional, often temporary new military units specially adapted for the campaigns; and last, reconfiguring and redesigning the uniforms and equipment of everyone. First to be considered is the reworking of existing units. This effort centered mainly on opening the formations to allow quicker deployment and movement in close terrain and emphasizing the marksmanship of individual soldiers rather than the unaimed volley or platoon fire of the unit. With an army of marksmen in loose formations the British were able to compete with the swift colonial forces if they became engaged in terrain constricted by underbrush, trees, and intersecting streams and gorges. The army still preferred, and rightly so, to form its regiments in tight ranks and rely on the bayonet charge when in

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<sup>2</sup> The Howe brothers are easily confused. The three mentioned in this thesis are: Brigadier General Lord George Augustus Howe, (henceforth referred to as Lord Howe), who, until his death 6 July 1758, was Abercromby's second-in-command ; Lieutenant General Sir William Howe, (henceforth referred to as William Howe), who trained the light infantry at Salisbury; and Admiral Lord Richard Howe, (henceforth referred to as Admiral Howe), the naval officer mentioned in Chapter Three.

open, less restricting terrain.<sup>3</sup> The loose formation that eventually emerged was a two-rank line with some space between files.<sup>4</sup>

The two-rank line was definitely the usual practice in North America by 1759, even though regulation, drill manual and tradition called for a three-rank line. We do not know from explicit evidence whether the two-rank line was a loose or a close one. However, there is considerable circumstantial evidence and some near-contemporary material to suggest a loose two-rank line may have been adopted in practice at least by 1759.

The "line" infantry regiments certainly adopted some sort of two-rank line by 1759.<sup>5</sup> This "...innovation, the work of Amherst

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<sup>3</sup> The regiment was an administrative unit. The unit used in combat was called a battalion and resulted from removing the regimental staff from the regiment. Likewise, the company was an administrative unit. Each battalion held a number of companies that varied from eight to nine, ten or twelve through the eighteenth century. One of these was a special "grenadier" company, which was composed of the stronger and taller men. They were usually separated from their parent battalions and brigaded with other grenadier companies and were used as the "shock troops" of the army. Together with the light infantry companies these were known as the "flank" companies, while the other companies were known as "hatmen," "battalion-companies", or "center-companies".

<sup>4</sup> A "rank" is a row of men and a "file" is a column of men formed by putting multiple ranks in succession. Hence, a two-rank line is formed when two rows of men are aligned one behind the other. In this case there would be two men in each "file". Close order is achieved when the files are aligned in such a way that with arms at their sides, one man's right arm touches the next man's left arm and the ranks are separated just enough to allow the men to walk without tripping one another. Loose and open order are used interchangeably here and represent the same formation as above but with larger (usually two to three feet) gaps between ranks and files.

<sup>5</sup> There were two types of regiments in the British Army -- the line regiments and the household regiments. According to E. E. Curtis's *The Organization of the British Army in the American Revolution*, (hereafter, *British Army Organization*), the household "included three regiments of Foot Guards (the 1st or Grenadier Guards, the 2nd or Coldstream, the third or Scots Guards) and three regiments of Horse Guards." The household regiments were the King's

himself, [was] introduced early in 1759 in the regiments serving in America;...both...his forces moving upon Montreal...and [the army under] Wolfe lying before Quebec. This consisted of a simple and speedy means of reducing the depth of the battalion line from three ranks to two ranks, and of preserving in three ranks the same frontage allowed by the two-deep firing line."<sup>6</sup> Amherst's intentions are not clear. By removing the third rank he may have intended his new order to allow the men to cover a wider front, an important consideration with attrition taking its toll on the regimental strengths; or he may have expected a loose two-rank line to move more freely through obstacles such as sparse woods; or by opening the formation he may have hoped to improve individual, aimed fire by giving the men more elbow room. Any one or more of these could be correct and would be a progressive move in tactics.

Amherst's explanation of the new practice to his command does not help: " 'the enemy have very few regular troops to oppose us, and no yelling of Indians, or fire from Canadians, can possibly withstand two ranks, if the men are silent, attentive, and obedient to their officers.' "<sup>7</sup> He merely explains why he felt the two-rank line

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bodyguard and normally stayed near London and Westminster. However, during the Seven Years' War 3,500 men of the Foot Guards fought in Germany. During the American Revolution fifteen men were drawn from each of the sixty-four companies of the Foot Guards and were sent to the American Colonies to serve there as the "Brigade of Guards." The line regiments were the normal regiments of the army.

<sup>6</sup> Houlding, *Fit for Service*, p. 373.

<sup>7</sup> A. G. Doughty, (ed.), *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America For the Years 1757, 1758, 1759 and 1760* (by Captain John Knox), (hereafter, *Knox's Journal*), pp. 487-8, n. 84.

could be safely used. This is one reason the three-rank line was usually retained in Europe: There were too many cavalry units in the field that were capable of running down a looser, more shallow formation while the dearth of horsemen in the campaigns in America negated this fear. Rapid, accurate fire was the key in any battle involving close terrain.

The new formation was not merely ordered into effect and left at that. After being introduced toward the end of January 1759 it was practiced in May on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, for the ensuing expedition against Quebec. By 9 July 1759, four years after Monongahela, the practice was set down as regulation drill by a standing order, for all units serving in America.<sup>8</sup> Proof that the order was executed comes from accounts of the British deployment at the celebrated victory of 13 September 1759 on the Plains of Abraham, outside Quebec in Canada. According to Canadian Historian, Colonel C. P. Stacey, after scrambling up the woody slope at the *Ans au Foulon* (Wolfe's Cove), Wolfe had arranged his line of battle on the Heights, and "...evidently in order to cover the long front... [the army was] ... formed only two deep, instead of the three, then usual."<sup>9</sup> But we return to the question: was Wolfe's two-rank line a loose two-rank line or a close one? The question of "loose"

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 348-9 for Cape Breton, 487-8 for the standing order. For a description of description of technique put in use see J.C. Webster (ed.), *The Journal of Jeffrey Amherst, Recording the Military Career of General Amherst in America from 1758 to 1763*, (hereafter, *Amherst's Journal*), p. 224.

<sup>9</sup> C. P. Stacey, *Quebec, 1759*, p. 138. Although Stacey got the two-rank formation correct, his guess as to the reason was incorrect, as we have seen.



versus "close" may at first seem an insignificant detail but it is of critical importance. If the army continued the traditional close formation, even in two ranks, then it did not really adapt well to the conditions. A close order two-rank line was still a rather clumsy formation for America's close terrain, so the army may still be looked on as simple and hidebound. But if it was a loose formation, then the whole foundation supporting so many stereotypes of the army comes crashing down! Instead of a neat series of rows, always preoccupied with dressing ranks and checking uniformity — a rather absurd practice in the forest — the army becomes a free-flowing group of soldiers capable of acting on individual initiative, albeit limited, held together by training, discipline and unit pride, rather than by a prodding of halberds and spontoons by sergeants and subalterns.<sup>10</sup> This is a far cry from the attitude held by Frederick the Great, the "Soldier-King" of Prussia. His men served as the role model of the mid-eighteenth century but he probably never allowed such independence of action. A characteristic line from him tells the whole story: "If my soldiers begin to think, not one would remain in the ranks."<sup>11</sup>

There exists a good body of near-contemporary and circumstantial material to help support the suggestion that a loose

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<sup>10</sup> A halberd is a polearm with a head like an axe while a spontoon is a short pike. According to regulation, these were carried by noncommissioned officers and company officers and used to threaten and force the men to remain in line. Officers usually substituted fusils (a type of light musket) for their polearms when on campaign in America.

<sup>11</sup> Houlding, *Fit for Service*, p. v. This subject is discussed in Chapters Two and Four of this thesis.

two-rank line may have been in use in the Seven Years' War in North America. Sir Henry Clinton wrote after the American Rebellion that "Sir William Howe had retained [for the use of his army] the formations universally practiced by the British troops during the French and Indian War: single file, on the march, and in action 'the open, flimsy order of two deep in line.'"<sup>12</sup> [emphasis mine.] This recollection by Clinton would certainly confirm our previous suggestions but how are we to interpret 'the open, flimsy order of two deep in line'? Does this mean the two-rank line, in close order, was 'open' and 'flimsy' as compared with the three-rank line in close order, or does it mean that the two-rank line was opened up beyond the close, shoulder-touching-shoulder order of the drill books? The two-rank line of the American War for Independence was an open order line. Perhaps it is reasonable to interpret Clinton's words as confirming that the formations of the Seven Years' War in North America and the American Rebellion were the same. He said 'Howe had retained the formations,' not 'Howe had spread out the two-rank line,' or 'Howe changed the formation.' Nevertheless, Clinton's memoir is a recollection after the war about an earlier practice, and he spent his Seven Years' War duty in Northern Germany, not North America, thus making it twice removed from the event. Without these caveats, Clinton's words would be enough to verify the formation; with the caveats, they leave the subject open to discussion.

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<sup>12</sup> William B. Wilcox, (ed.) *The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775-1782, with an Appendix of Original Documents*, (hereafter, *The American Rebellion*), p. 95.

The above discussion concerned the regular line regiments which are to this day the bulwarks of tradition in the British army. They did not lead the reform in the army but were probably not far behind. Special provisional units were created in the field by the authority of the local commanders and led the effort to take the war into the enemy's country. They were trained to operate in the back country of the American Continent with the same level of skill as the natives. The well known and lavishly lionized actions of the ranger and light infantry units such as Roger's and Goreham's Rangers, the several Highland regiments, Gage's 80th Regiment of Light armed foot, and Colonel William Howe's light infantry demonstrate the popularity of this innovation. They tried to attract young, intelligent and active men from the rank and file of the regular line battalions to serve in the light infantry. Because they proved so effective in the little war, the need for reliable, active light troops increased and light infantry officers were given more latitude in choosing recruits. They were allowed to reject men they considered unfit, and accepted only the best prospects. This practice of selectivity was a well founded one, for being employed in the light infantry or rangers meant constant duty. Initially their main purpose was to contribute to march security and add versatility to the British army tactics, but whenever a task arose that might be classified as dangerous, difficult or miscellaneous it usually fell to the light infantry or

rangers to perform it. From the time of creation, the special light infantry corps saw active duty throughout the war.<sup>13</sup>

The first documented establishment of light companies within the regiments was an unofficial addition made to Kingsley's (20th) Regiment of Foot.<sup>14</sup> The documentation is imbedded within a description of another non-standard, non-regulation practice of the regiment. The troops were exercised in Europe in the alternate fire method by (then Lieutenant Colonel) James Wolfe in 20th foot in 1755, which was an alternative to the regulation platoon fire method then prescribed for the army. Apparently Kingsley's regiment drilled in both methods. The regulated one was kept up for reviews but promptly forgotten in action, where the more handy alternate fire method would be employed. In describing this method of fire, Wolfe documents the existence of a light company. "The left-hand battalion company - following French practice, and anticipating the light-infantry companies soon to be raised [in 1759] -was designated a 'picquet' company and held its own flank."<sup>15</sup> The picquet companies were used as skirmishers by the French. This development in the French army predates the Seven Years' War and

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<sup>13</sup> The most famous of these dangerous missions included the use of the light infantry to lead Abercromby's disastrous assault at Fort Ticonderoga and the one undertaken by a picked squad of twenty-four light infantry that led the way up the cliff at Wolfe's Cove to start the battle on the Plains of Abraham.

<sup>14</sup> The use of independent light infantry companies predates this and "The first light troops in the British Army were the Independent Companies raised for policing the Highlands of Scotland. In 1739 these were formed into the first Highland Regiment (later the 42nd Foot)." Michael Barthorp, *British Infantry Uniforms Since 1660*, (hereafter, *Infantry*), p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> Houlding, *Fit for Service*, p. 319.

Wolfe's adapting it to the system he used predates any adjustments that may have been made as a result of reports of Braddock's defeat. British experiences in America probably hastened the addition of picquet companies but they were not invented in the Colonies nor were they a result of combat there. Rather, the picquet company appears to have been a European invention.<sup>16</sup>

The subsequent move toward the use of light troops was directed from the highest level of military command. According to Mollo, "...The Duke of Cumberland, [British Commander-in-Chief at this time],<sup>17</sup> told John Campbell, Earl of Loudoun, [the Commander-in-Chief in the American theater], that 'till *Regular* officers with men that they trust, learn to beat the woods, and act as *irregulars*, you will never gain any certain intelligence of the enemy.' Spurred on by "a sloppy, undisciplined scouting party of rangers in November 1757 and a small mutiny of other Rangers,"<sup>18</sup> Lord Loudoun accepted this

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<sup>16</sup> J. F. C. Fuller, *British Light Infantry in the Eighteenth Century*, (hereafter *British Light Infantry*), pp. 19-20, says "At the beginning of the sixteenth century, a banneret of Landsknechts consisted of four hundred men, fifty of whom were arquebusiers [an early firearm]. Ten such bannerets formed the tactical unit of the day, and the five hundred arquebusiers, or "shots," belonging to it, were employed as flankers, or skirmishers,..." The picquet company was a derivative of them.

<sup>17</sup> E. E. Curtis, *British Army Organization*, provides an excellent and detailed explanation of the intricacies of organization of the army. For our purposes, it is enough to present a quick review of the upper command structure. At the top was the King who served as Captain-General of the army and navy. He delegated some of his powers to an overall Commander-in-Chief. (Cumberland held this title during the Seven Years' War.) Next was the Secretary at War. He held an important office, whose duties are detailed in Curtis, pp. 34-5. Finally, came the theater Commander-in-Chief who answered to the above three men.

<sup>18</sup> Philip Katcher, *Armies of the American Wars 1753-1815*, p. 33.

advice and in September 1757 placed 'gentleman Volunteers' from the regular regiments to train with Roger's Rangers.<sup>19</sup> Lord Loudoun was certainly influenced by the positive results gained by American "Ranging Companies" such as those captained by the Gorham and the Rogers brothers. These rangers had exerted themselves in behalf of the Crown as the answer to Canadian raiders.

Generally, the Gorhams are less well-remembered than the Rogers, but their services precede the Rogers' by an entire decade. John Gorham's rangers began their career as "'Indian Rangers of the Woods,'... mostly [composed of] full-blooded, practically naked Mohawk warriors with a sprinkling of half-breeds sent by William Shirley to relieve Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, in 1744. In 1747, [King] George II was '...pleased to grant a commission to Captain Gorham to command a Company of One Hundred men to be employed for the defense of His Majesty's fortress of Annapolis and Province of Nova Scotia.'"<sup>20</sup> Due to Gorham's considerable efforts, the Acadians

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<sup>19</sup> John Mollo, *Uniforms of the Seven Years War 1756-1763*, (hereafter, *Seven Years War Uniforms*), p. 176. The British were not alone in their desire to use regular troops to provide scouting reports. The French commander, Louis Joseph, Marquis de Montcalm was not satisfied with his Indian and Canadian scouting reports which "...obviously were exaggerated and in many particulars patently false. Moreover the reporters were not military professionals and could not render an account of what they saw which would enable the strategists to plot their course intelligently." French regulars reported a force assembling near Fort William Henry of 2,500 raw recruits as it was, while the Indian scouts put it at 25,000. Robert Thompson Pell, "Montcalm in America," *Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum*, (hereafter, "Montcalm," *BFTM*), Vol., 8, no. 5, p. 210. Montcalm was probably the most expert high ranking guerrilla leader in the French Army. He spent most of the War of the Austrian Succession fighting mountain partisans in the Mountains of Italy. See Chapter Two.

<sup>20</sup> John R. Elting, (ed.), *Military Uniforms in America: The Era of the American Revolution, 1755-1795*, (hereafter, *MUIA* ), p. 10.

and Indian tribes of Nova Scotia were largely quieted and English authority was maintained. In 1749, Gorham's Rangers were put on the regular establishment. The elder brother, Captain John Gorham, died in 1751 and was succeeded by First Lieutenant Joseph Gorham. He commanded the company in 1759 at Quebec. It was one of six ranger companies on the field that day.

The more familiar story of Robert Rogers and "His Majesty's Independent Companies of American Rangers" began in 1757 when the group was formed out of the 'ranging companies' of the New Hampshire Provincial Regiment. The corps was neither strictly regular nor provincial, as it was not listed on the regular establishment but was paid by the Crown. Such an unusual situation might be another indication of the high regard held by King George II for troops that showed skill in the little war such as His Majesty's American Rangers. The little war attracted the Crown's attention even at this early date. Its original company of sixty-four officers and men was gradually added to until it was eventually one of several companies that totaled battalion strength. The rangers were involved in continual episodes of the little war against the French that raged up and down the Champlain Valley throughout 1756 to 1759.<sup>21</sup> They served as the eyes and ears of General Lord Loudoun's

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<sup>21</sup> "Little war" is synonymous with "irregular war," and translates to "la petite guerre," and "der kleine Krieg," in French and German. The term was succinctly defined by Clausewitz in 1810: 'we understand the employment of small units in the field; actions involving 20, 50, 100 or 3-400 men belong to the little war, unless they form a part of a larger engagement.' As quoted by Peter Paret, "Colonial Experience", *BIHR*, p. 53. He quoted this from "Unpublished lectures on the little war", held in 1810 and 1811 at the

army. If we combine the ranger's strong record based on performance, with Roger's well-known flair for self-promotion, it is understandable that the General chose Rogers to conduct "on-the-job training" for the 'gentlemen Volunteers'. His "cadets" were turned over to the rangers and made to travel, live and fight as rangers.<sup>22</sup>

Loudoun did not leave the process of developing light infantry corps to this voluntary action. In addition to placing volunteer officers with the rangers, he also set out to initiate two ranger companies in each regular regiment of his army. The men he sought were the same young, intelligent and wiry men that generally were successful in this demanding service. The light infantryman became an essential arm of the service. We best remember the Quebec campaign of 1759 for the mad scramble up the cliff at Wolfe's Cove, the perfect volley which won the day, and the mortal wounds suffered by Montcalm and Wolfe. But, "...there was also frequent skirmishing, and the bringing in of cattle and plunder... the main force was often dependent on the quantity of cattle brought in by the light troops, otherwise having to eat horse flesh." Another useful innovation was started by an order for the light troops to practice using snow shoes.<sup>23</sup> "Five pair of these rackets are delivered to each

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Allgemeine Kriegsschule in Berlin. 'Introduction.' University of Munster, Clausewitz Archive.

<sup>22</sup> Mollo, *Seven Years War Uniforms*, p. 175.

<sup>23</sup> This practice was probably due to Major Robert Rogers's influence. His men frequently traveled by snowshoe while on winter campaign. See Douglas Edward Leach, *Arms for Empire: A Military History of the British Colonies in North America 1607-1763*, (hereafter, *Arms for Empire*), pp. 393-4.



corps, and the officers of the light armed companies are to be answerable that they are not lost or broken.' " Not surprisingly, when the French began to press forward in 1760 to retake Quebec from General Murray, the British light armed foot were pushed out from the city "to watch the motions of the enemy."<sup>24</sup>

Before Lord Loudoun could enforce his desire to establish two ranger companies in each battalion of his army in New York his efforts were made redundant. In 1757 Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Gage, the leader of the advance guard of General Edward Braddock's ill-fated expedition to Fort Dusquesne two years earlier, offered to recruit and uniform, with his own money, a battalion of 500 men to act as rangers. He requested that if the Crown approved the experiment, he be reimbursed for the cost. His plan was approved and the regiment was recruited during the following winter. Gage provided the corps with dark brown jackets and breeches, leather leggings and belting and brimmed jockey style caps. They carried tomahawks in addition to bayonets and muskets.

As each campaign passed, light infantry corps gained ever greater importance and continually added to their duties. A light company was formed in each battalion. About the same time Loudoun's army was converted into a tailors' convention, cropping coats and trimming uniforms. Over in Nova Scotia, near Fortress Louisbourg, Generals Amherst and Wolfe also brought forth needle

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<sup>24</sup> Eric Robson, "British Light Infantry in the Mid-Eighteenth Century: The Effect of American Conditions ", *Army Quarterly*, (hereafter, "British Light Infantry"), pp. 213 - 214.

and thread. They had the light infantry trim their hats into caps, put the coat sleeves on waistcoats, and add distinctive shoulder patches that looked like miniature wings. Equipment was not ignored. Leather pouches were provided for spare balls and flints, light fusils replaced heavy muskets, a powder horn augmented each cartridge box while a tomahawk was provided in addition to a good bayonet.<sup>25</sup> Dressed in loose, light and comfortable uniforms, equipped with practical and more deadly weapons, and exercised to run, jump and fire accurately, the light infantryman became as skilled at the "Indian style" of combat as the Indian. The army could now fight the Indians and French irregulars on their own terms.<sup>26</sup>

Such was the alacrity of the army in the field accepting these changes, that "Rangers, and light infantry appointed to act as rangers, ... became distinguished from normal troops, for by the 28th of July, 1759, Knox [Captain in the 43rd Regiment of foot] was already recording the 'eight battalion companies' of his regiment as a separate body from the two companies [grenadiers and light infantry] of special troops."<sup>27</sup> Eventually, the custom with the grenadier companies of the army was followed by the light

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<sup>25</sup> Mollo, *Seven Years War Uniforms*, p. 176. A fusil is a small musket.

<sup>26</sup> The Battle of Bushy Run (1764), fought as a result of Pontiac's Rebellion (1763-1766), is a good example of the proficiency reached in fighting Indians. Colonel Bouquet, with elements of the 42nd and 77th Highland regiments and his own battalion of the 60th Royal Americans, utterly routed a force of Indians by applying the tactics just worked out in the French and Indian War. For a full account of this battle, as well as other exploits of the Colonel, see William Smith, *An Historical Account of the Expedition against the Ohio Indians, in the Year MDCCLXIV., under the Command of Henri Bouquet*.

<sup>27</sup> Robson, "British Light Infantry", p. 211.

companies; they were stripped from their parent battalions and formed into special bodies which operated together for a campaign. William Howe commanded them in 1759 and it was twenty-four of his volunteers who first ascended the *Ans au Foulon* to lead the army to a victory and General Wolfe into history.

The British light infantry were not the first new units raised in America. If they were raised as a response to the difficulty in finding reliable scouts and rangers, then the Royal American Regiment was raised as a result of manpower loss in the debacle at Monongahela in 1755. Some argue it was raised for use as a light infantry to counter the Indians and Canadians at their own game.<sup>28</sup> Peter Paret claims, "The first regiment of this kind, the 60th Royal Americans, was 'recruited from settlers, mainly of German or Swiss origin... to which were added volunteers from British regiments and others from Europe. Many of the senior officers and a considerable number of the company officers were also drawn from the armies of Europe.' "<sup>29</sup> He also asserts "...for the first time, lace was removed from [the Royal American's] privates' uniforms, and the coat was shortened, in order to provide a uniform more suitable for bush warfare."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> For an opposite view, see Elting, *MUIA* p. 6 which says that only Bouquet's battalion was a light infantry unit. The others fought as regular line infantry and did not train as light infantry during the war.

<sup>29</sup> Paret, "Colonial Experience", *BIHR*, p. 52. quoted Sir Edward Hutton, *A Brief History of the King's Royal Rifle Corps* (Winchester, 1917), p. 2., note 2.

<sup>30</sup> Robson, "British Light Infantry", p. 210, quotes Stanley M. Pargellis, *Lord Loudoun in North America*, p. 64, note 21. We shall see this is not altogether correct. Braddock did the same in 1755.

In his article on the effects of colonial warfare on the regular European armies, Paret summarized: "The British light infantry, first raised in North America during the seventeen-fifties, constituted an attempt to adapt linear methods to operations in difficult terrain.... They served as advance guards, led assaults and landings, and at times were employed to pursue French and Indian raiding parties."<sup>31</sup> He concludes that, "Possibly their tactics were somewhat more flexible than those of the line, ... but their drill, discipline and equipment were essentially those of the rest of the army, and more often than not they were used like regular infantry."<sup>32</sup> He continues to suggest that the Colonial experience (including the American War for Independence) was of little importance to the overall development of the European regular armies.

He places too little importance on the fact that the Royal American Regiment was not a homogeneous corps in any way. James Prevost, "an incompetent swiss adventurer who was apparently fleeing from a French court-martial,"<sup>33</sup> convinced the Duke of Cumberland, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, to approve a new regiment to be raised. It was authorized as the 62nd (Royal) Regiment and permitted to raise four battalions (while most regiments on the British and Irish establishment had two). 24 December 1755, the Earl of Loudoun, new commander of British

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<sup>31</sup> Paret, "Colonial Experience", *BIHR*, p. 52.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p. 54.

<sup>33</sup> Elting, *MUIA*, p. 6.

forces in North America, was commissioned its Colonel-in-Chief. Final approval for the regiment came on 9 March 1756. Each battalion was authorized to have a colonel-commandant and a lieutenant colonel. This situation made each of the four battalions unique and their individual service records almost serve as a microcosm of the service of the entire British army in America during the Seven Years' War. During the seven years of war, the Royal Americans rank-and-file was a collection of multi-lingual individuals. They were perhaps one-fourth Americans, one-half cast-offs from Irish regiments, and the rest "miscellaneous Germans, Poles and Bohemians." When Shirley's and Pepperill's regiments were broken after the bulk of their men were taken captive when Oswego was taken by the enemy, the 62nd was re-numbered the 60th. Because of the widely varied character of each battalion, it might instead have been more appropriate to make the four battalions into four separate regiments.

What made the battalions so diverse were the uneven backgrounds and experiences of their officers. The regiment was extremely fortunate in attracting Henry Bouquet to serve as lieutenant colonel of the first battalion. His long and distinguished career as a guerrilla warrior was capped by the action at Bushy Run in 1764. As has been mentioned above, his force demonstrated the full potential of combining solid European discipline with the loose, fluid American scramble. They engaged and completely defeated an uprising of Chief Pontiac's Indians in this way.

Along with Frederick Haldimand, Lieutenant Colonel of the second battalion, Bouquet was the first to reach America to begin recruiting. Recruits were typically hard to find and Bouquet had some difficulty meeting manpower goals. By December 1756, Bouquet had only 547 men of the 1,000 approved for his battalion, but he was able to add to that number in steady, if thin, streams of recruits having somewhat questionable backgrounds.<sup>34</sup> Despite this, Bouquet was able to train the first battalion as light infantry, skilled at forest warfare. Ironically, they served in the campaign that finally took Fort Dusquesne — the place that gave Braddock so much trouble.

So far, we have only quickly touched on the revolution which took place in uniforms and equipment in North America during the Seven Years' War. But it becomes absolutely imperative that this concept be understood if the balance of the paper is to be effective. Even as early as 1755, the regular army had begun to make strides to equip and dress its men more suitably. Much maligned General Braddock had labored diligently to ease the burden of his men prior to their upcoming summer campaign. At Fort Cumberland, Maryland, he responded to the problem of his troops' being overloaded with equipment by ordering them to leave much unnecessary baggage behind when the march to Duquesne commenced. The order read, "The soldiers are to leave their Shoulder Belts, Waist Belts and

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<sup>34</sup> Elting, *MUIA*, p. 6. The 60th included apprehended deserters from the 50th and 51st, castoffs from the Irish regiments, and volunteers from French prisoners of war. Pargellis, *Lord Loudoun in North America*, pp. 111-112.

hangers behind and only take with them to the Field one spare shirt, one spare pair of stockings, one spare pair of Shoes and one pair of Brown Gaters.' Lightweight waistcoats and breeches replaced the heavier regulation uniforms, and leather bladders were inserted in all hats to protect the wearer from sunstroke. Officers and sergeants discarded their espartoos and halberds, replacing them with fusees."<sup>35</sup> Braddock would never know it but he had started a revolution in the uniforming of the King's troops in North America. Rarely again would the men worry about pipeclay or powder in that wild land.

Three years later a young English nobleman stood firmly on a rising stretch of ground near Fort Edward. He shaded his eyes from the afternoon sun to view more clearly the scene which unfolded before him. A silent file of grim men, clad in green buckskins and blue Scottish bonnets, emerged from the nearby glen. They hustled along two captured deserters dressed in short blue coats, trimmed in red.<sup>36</sup> Their leader immediately made for General Abercromby's tent to report on the morning's scout toward Ticonderoga. The young gentleman may have pondered the implications of this event, or any one of another several like it: the rangers came and went and served

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<sup>35</sup> Francis Thayer Nichols, "The Organization of Braddock's Army", William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Ser., 4 (1947), pp. 141-2. Quotes Pargellis, 'ed.), *Military Affairs in North America 1748-1765: Selected Documents from the Cumberland Papers in Windsor Castle*, (hereafter, *Cumberland Papers*), p. 83.

<sup>36</sup> This particular episode is fictitious, however the troops, especially the rangers, were frequently involved in capturing deserters. See Gary Zaboly, "Descriptions of Military Uniforms and Equipage in North America, 1755-1764" in *Military Collector and Historian*, Volume 39, pp. 2-20, 71-2, for a list of deserter reports.

well as the eyes of the army, but why not ask the regulars to do the same?

A few weeks hence, the Englishman would himself return from one of these outings, joyfully competing with the ranger captain in shooting at pinecones hurled into the air. For Lord Howe was particularly impressed by Rogers and his "English Savages" - the sobriquet assigned by the French to these American rangers. As Colonel of the 55th regiment of foot and a very popular man with provincial and regular alike, the Viscount was in a position to make his views heard. He was second in command to General Abercromby of the force marching toward Fort Ticonderoga. Prime Minister Pitt considered Abercromby generally unfit, or at least uninspiring, but had to give him the command. To compromise, Pitt had to settle for having Lord Howe as Abercromby's second and hoped he would be the real commander and spirit of the expedition.

Noting the common sense in action demonstrated by Rogers and his rangers, Lord Howe set out to learn their methods. He sent some officers and also personally attended numerous "scouts" in the field with the American rangers and did as they did. The results were spectacular and could be seen in the 55th Regiment which he had made over to be more suitable to the environment. Equipment, uniforms, methods and manners were all rendered new. Some very colorful descriptions of his people have been preserved in memoirs and diaries. Historian John Elting provides a good collection of these:

Anne MacVickers - who, as a young girl, had seen him at the Schuyler home - [recalled] "...Lord Howe...



forbade all displays of gold and scarlet... and set the example of wearing himself an ammunition [issue] coat... one of the surplus soldier's coats cut short... he ordered the muskets to be shortened... the barrels of their guns were all blackened... he set the example by wearing leggins...."

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Richard Huck, Lord Loudoun's former surgeon, who served on the frontier for several years, wrote bluntly from Albany on May 29, 1758: "The Art of War is much changed and improved here. I suppose by the end of the summer it will have undergone a total revolution. We are now literally an army of round Heads. Our hair is about an inch long; the Flaps of our Hats, which are wore slouched, about two inches and a half broad. Our coats are docked rather shorter than the Highlanders,... [who] have put on Breeches and Lord Howe's Filabegs,...many have taken up the hatchet and wear Tomahawks."

Huck's overall comments lead one to believe the entire army followed the example of the 55th. Elting includes two additional confirmations of these reports from "an unidentified British officer" and "the copybook of an unsuccessful trader named John McComb."<sup>37</sup>

Lord Howe set a powerful example. He was unsatisfied with just making over the uniforms. He also accounted for important equipment changes. "Every effort apparently was made to fit the men for woods fighting," recalled Norreys J. O'Connor. "...10 Rifled Barrelled Guns were delivered out to each regiment to be put into the hands of the best Marksmen."<sup>38</sup> With such weapons, very

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<sup>37</sup> Elting, *MUIA*, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> O'Connor, Norreys J., *Servant of the Crown in England and in North America 1756-1761*, pp. 92-95.

accurate at longer ranges, the regulars could trade shots with snipers who sought to annoy the army from a distance. O'Connor also confirms the order that each man carry thirty-six rounds of ammunition and thirty pounds of meal which the ranker had to cook himself. This increased allotment of ammunition gave the men an ability to keep up a sustained fire without fear of being left empty. With a lighter load and several days' supply of food in hand, detachments were able to go longer without new supplies. Intelligent alterations made the individual soldier more flexible and thereby more effective. He could travel with enough speed and for sufficient duration to keep up with targets he could hit at a distance. The small detachments were made independent from supply magazines, making them able to penetrate far into the wilderness in search of the enemy.

The army discovered at least one negative repercussion from its string of uniform revisions. By shortening the coats to make an effective field jacket, winter service suddenly became quite uncomfortable. The lighter clothes did not provide enough protection from the cold Canadian winters. Besides issuing fur-lined hats and mittens, and making blanket coats, the method of making jackets was also changed. Instead of cutting the uniform coat down to a jacket, in 1759 some unknown individual suggested the practice of removing only the sleeves of the heavy uniform coat and then attaching them to the uniform's sleeveless waistcoat. The sleeves could then be removed from the waistcoat and sewn back onto the uniform coat in cold weather. In 1760 General Jeffrey

Amherst "would reach the logical conclusion of directing that the troops 'go in their waistcoats.'"<sup>39</sup>

In this long and trying struggle for supremacy the army underwent a vast series of improvements. Uniforms and equipment had been radically altered, many ad hoc light corps and ranger outfits were established, and the line companies were given an expanded role. New ideas and young officers provided the beacon which the rest would follow. Although we can make only a qualified assertion that the regular soldiers operated in a loose order two-rank line in the Seven Years' War in America, it is certainly undeniable that the army did not adhere to the regulations and practices of the parade ground. We can declare, without reservation, that the British army was adaptive in its methods of employing, equipping and clothing its troops. The line troops placed first priority on their marksmanship and probably operated in a loose order, while still maintaining the ability to charge with bayonet. The light infantry and rangers often operated in a manner far beyond anything that might be termed "rigid" or "linear" by constantly probing deep into unfriendly territory. Although their role in the little war was paramount before and after battles, they often led assaults and used the bayonet when faced by an unwavering enemy. None of their abilities was gained without a concerted effort by everyone involved. Let us not think that spending a few nights with Roger's Rangers made every man an elite guerrilla. A light infantry outfit required

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<sup>39</sup> Elting, *MUIA* , p. 4.

the most extensive training and discipline of any other type of unit in the army. First, the men had to be expert in the evolutions of the line, and then they had to undertake considerably more training in their specialty. Training was constant.

Training in the field had supplemented the "basic training" given at home and "By 1759 the [British] forces engaged in North American operations were the equal of the French, the Canadians, and their Indian irregulars. Since Braddock's defeat, the regiments, after arriving in the colonies, had taken advantage of every opportunity to carry on their advanced training."<sup>40</sup> The training was varied and prolonged and definitely adaptive to the rough conditions the army faced. A glance through the diaries, journals and memoirs confirms that by 1758-9, items like target practice were given precedence over other aspects of training.<sup>41</sup> Amherst noted at the Staten Island training camp that was set up to prepare a force bound for the West Indies, "Nothing steadys them so much to firing as by firing balls."<sup>42</sup>

The Peace of Paris, signed on 10 February 1763, ended hostilities between France and England. Following tradition, the military establishment was reduced to a cheaper, less threatening, peacetime level.<sup>43</sup> The new innovative light infantry corps were

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<sup>40</sup> Houlding, *Fit for Service*, pp. 257-264. Gives a complete description of the regimen of basic training. See pp. 364-5 for comparison with irregulars.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 365-8.

<sup>42</sup> J. C. Webster, (ed.), *Amherst's Journal*, p. 273.

<sup>43</sup> One problem faced by British military people was the considerable fear held by their civilian countrymen of a tyranny that might be imposed on them by a

reduced in numbers or disbanded. Gage's 80th Regiment of light armed foot was disbanded and Howe's provisional battalion of amalgamated light infantry companies was broken up. The light companies were split up and the men were returned to their parent regiments. Many officers found themselves jobless, on half-pay. Even the senior line regiments were reduced in strength, with only a cadre remaining.

Despite this reduction, the improved uniforms, equipment, tactics and especially marksmanship were not long forgotten, if at all. Colonel Thomas Gage had been retained in garrison in America and kept up the practice. He ordered a detachment commander, Colonel Campbell in Detroit, to "make every soldier in your regiment a good marksman." Four years after the Peace of Paris, 23 November 1767, no change in Gage's views was seen. He wrote to Captain Edmonstone, stationed at Fort Pitt in Pennsylvania, that he was "very right in practicing the recruits of the 34th regiment to fire at marks."<sup>44</sup> Again, on the first of October, 1771, Gage reaffirmed his stance concerning the proper use of men in the distant wild. He wrote to Hillsborough that he had given direction for the troops at Illinois to be marched and trained "for the service of the woods."<sup>45</sup>

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despot at the head of a large standing army. Consequently, the army lost all continuity between wars when it was reduced to a peace footing. See Curtis, *British Army Organization*, p. 33 and Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America 1775-1865*, pp. 31-9.

<sup>44</sup> Gage MSS., American Series, letters of 20 April 1765, and 23 November 1767.

<sup>45</sup> Carter, C. E. *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage, 1763-1775*, Vol. II, p. 569.

In the army augmentations of 1771, a light company was once again added to each regiment in England, for the first time as a permanent fixture. The same was done to the regiments on the Irish establishment the following year.<sup>46</sup> They may have been trained as individual companies in the intervening years, but certainly in 1774 training was introduced at a grander scale. William Howe, considered the leading light infantry expert in the army, was made "drill instructor" that year in a special exercise to train a "new system of skirmishing and speedy maneuvers designed by him" at Salisbury plain during August and September 1774. The light companies which had been formed in 1771 in the 3rd, 11th, 21st, 29th, 32nd, 36th, and 70th regiments arrived at the training camp at Salisbury on 6 Aug 1774. The men trained in two ranks with an interval between files of either four or ten feet, depending on the desired effect. All formations were changed at the quick step or the run and were made from the center of the formation. This allowed very speedy maneuvers and rapid advances, but required a greater presence of mind of all involved.<sup>47</sup> After a successful series of training sessions, the men were reviewed at Richmond by the King.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Houlding, *Fit for Service*, pp. 251, 336 *in passim* and "In 1771-1772 light companies were once again raised in all the battalions, this time permanently."

<sup>47</sup> Changing the formation of an army in preparation for action was time consuming. Howe's instructions changed that. At the run, a battalion of five hundred men following his instructions could change from column to line in about two minutes instead of the fifteen it could take using the old method.

<sup>48</sup> Houlding, *Fit for Service*, p. 336, n. 29 from WO 5/58, pp. 462-3, 480-1, 491-2.

According to Houlding, William "Howe attempted to establish and then to spread through the army a good system of light infantry drill, which had heretofore been ad hoc, established at random; and to train the light companies on a uniform system....His system was excellent...carried out either at the quick step or at a run, and by observing both open (4 feet) and extended (ten feet) intervals between the files."<sup>49</sup> This camp also emphasized the practice of fire by the men; they were to shoot with ball at marks in order to perfect their aim and execution. When the new exercises were reviewed by King George III, he was shown the entire new method, not just a stylized drill-field review. William Howe wanted the new method to be regulated and made universal for troops operating in confined spaces but he failed to put through a universal regulation because presently the action in the colonies overtook his efforts.

Although the war interrupted the process of establishing a regulated light infantry drill, the process should not be considered ad hoc. The light infantry system was incorporated into customary practice and remained customary practice until the Napoleonic Wars. Without detailed regulation, the troops continued to learn the light mode of combat. In 1775 Roger Lamb, a corporal in the 9th Regiment of Foot, was sent from his regiment with other non-commissioned officers to be instructed in the new exercise. He reported that "seven companies were assembled at Salisbury in the summer of 1774." They were put through Howe's "excellent mode of

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336,7. Also, William Howe's *Light Infantry Discipline*, 1774 is available in microfilm at the National Army Museum, Chelsea.

discipline for light troops, ... [whose] maneuvers were chiefly intended for woody and intricate districts, with which North America abounds, where an army cannot act in line.... [The exercises] were six in number." Lamb was later sent back to his regiment to train it in the new maneuvers, the training of non-commissioned officers at Salisbury having been "preparatory to the general practice of it."<sup>50</sup> The 33rd Regiment served in Dublin as the training cadre for the troops in Ireland. <sup>51</sup>

The camp at Salisbury saw the first mass training exercise for the picquet companies, but the practice was continued in the training camps at home after William Howe left England for the command in America. One example of this is when in August 1778 at Warley Common the troops were divided in halves, one side was posted to defend a wood while the other half practiced assaulting their positions. Those defending the wooded area held off repeated advances against them. At the training camp at Kinsale that same year the light companies of nine regiments were "exercised at skirmishing tactics, rather as Howe's companies had been drilled at Salisbury."<sup>52</sup> There were constant efforts at other camps in England to train under conditions meant to simulate the situation in the rugged country across the Atlantic. Night marches, marches through rugged country, defense of posts, and similar exercises were

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<sup>50</sup> Roger Lamb, *Memoir of His Own Life*, (hereafter, *Memoir*), pp. 89-91, 94.

<sup>51</sup> Robson, "British Light Infantry", p. 215.

<sup>52</sup> Houlding, *Fit for Service*, p. 348.



undertaken by the troops training in Britain prior to embarking for the war.<sup>53</sup> Once the men arrived in these training camps, they were given ample training in the field. Field engineering, ranging, and the other arts of the *petite guerre* were taken up in earnest.

We leave the discussion of the British army in North America as it was once again about to embark for active campaigning in the colonies. To pick up the story immediately would ignore an important side of the army's mid-century experience. One hears little of the world-embracing events of the Seven Years' War in a study of American history. American histories usually brush those events aside and look upon the French and Indian War as a period of preparation for the American Revolution — the training ground for Father Washington and an era which removed the French threat, allowing increased tension between Old England and New. But the Seven Years' War was fought on several continents. Everywhere that the great Bourbon and British Empires touched, the struggle was taken up. Britain gained supremacy in India through force of arms, an achievement which would become as valuable in the approaching century as the "deliverance" of the eastern seaboard of North America.

This study of the meeting of the American scramble and European discipline must have three parts which will not always be separate. One part involves the American scramble, one involves the European discipline, and the last involves their meeting. This first

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, in *passim*.

chapter has presented a partial view of all three parts, but only from the North American point of view. We have seen what steps were taken by the British and French in the colonies — the latter only in passing. It might be reasonable to continue the study of the effects of American conditions by stepping directly into the American Revolution and picking up where William Howe left off with the light infantry training. However, a large number of the experienced soldiers in the army of 1775-1783 had first taken up arms in Europe, not America. Therefore, before launching into the next American war, we must first seek to understand what the European version of "European discipline" had become while Howe's men were acting so independently.

## Chapter II

Before we can understand how New World campaigning affected Old World regulars we must understand what they had experienced before crossing to America. Concurrent with the series of French and Indian Wars was a nearly matching series of wars on the Continent.<sup>1</sup> The states which sent men to North America had all participated in some of the Continental wars. Warfare in Europe at this time usually has been oversimplified and therefore inaccurately characterized as limited, formal, and linear in which commanders maneuvered their forces so as to defeat an enemy without battle. One historian portrays this stereotype in vivid terms: "a consummated battle therefore represented a seduction rather than a rape."<sup>2</sup> This is only true for a few campaigns and in a few areas.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the colonial wars see Leach, *Arms for Empire*, and Peckham, *The Colonial Wars 1689-1762*. The American wars were: King Williams War (1689-97), Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), King George's War (1744-48), the French and Indian War (1754-1760), and Pontiac's Rebellion (1763-1766). Wars in Europe included: War of the League of Augsburg [including Turkish advance on Vienna] (1683-97), War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713), Hapsburgs against the Turks and on Sicily (1716-1718), War of Polish Succession (1733-1735), Hapsburgs against the Turks (1737-1739), War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748), Jacobite Rebellion (1745-1746), Seven Years' War (1756-1763).

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Duffy, *The Army of Frederick the Great*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> For a dissimilar view of the nature of Seven Years' War campaigning in which combat was frequent, fluid and forced, see Sir Reginald Savory, *His Britannic Majesty's Army in Germany during the Seven Years War*, (hereafter, *Brittanic Army*).

The character of warfare in eighteenth century Europe is especially important to an accurate portrayal of warfare in North America only because histories of the latter so often insist on contrasting European combat style and North American combat style. The New World situation is often depicted as puzzling and new to Old World soldiers. Most typical of these puzzles is our unswerving notion that European regulars had never faced irregulars before coming to America. One author wrote quite recently: "The civilian population [facing Burgoyne in New York] gradually changed into a loosely arrayed body of irregulars of the sort unknown in the Old World."<sup>4</sup> This is simply false. Every time such an inaccurate stereotype appears in an American history, we must wonder if the author has consulted the sources on European military history. How can the rich literature concerning irregular warfare in this period have been missed?<sup>5</sup> This chapter surveys the more readily available English sources concerning the little war in Europe and establishes that European armies were completely familiar with it by the time France and Britain sent armies overseas to duel for the mastery of the American woods.

Every warring state of Europe had some exposure to the little war in the time that the Ranger first began learning to fight in the

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<sup>4</sup> Don Higginbotham, *The War for American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice 1763-1789*, (hereafter, *The War for American Independence*). p. 192.

<sup>5</sup> Paret, "Colonial Experience", *BIHR*, says G. von Scharnhorst's *Militairisches Taschenbuch zum Gebrauch im Felde* (Hanover, 1792) "cites four examples of raids, patrols and ambushes from the American War for Independence as against over sixty drawn from the Seven Years War."

woods of America. The rough terrain that encouraged this sort of warfare was not limited to the New World nor was the "Age of Reason", which has been credited with successfully ameliorating the devastation of battle, a universal condition in Europe. Even so, Frederick the Great, Soldier-King of Prussia, who represented these ideas, has emerged as the paradigmatic symbol of European warfare. It is to Frederick that all eyes have turned to understand the nature of that century's wars. He corresponded with thinkers like Voltaire who preferred:

...to be ruled by a single lion than by a thousand rats of their own kind. Frederick indeed came close to being considered the archetypal enlightened absolutist. His wars were dismissed as a distressing aberration, and the whole of 'enlightened' Europe admired his abhorrence of idleness and superstition, and the way in which he filled out the ranks of his army with mercenaries, leaving the native peasants and craftsmen to get on with their work undisturbed.<sup>6</sup>

Such philosophies may have been discussed in the salons of Paris or even Berlin, but somehow, I cannot imagine Croatian and Serbian irregulars, or even Frederick's Potsdam Guards for that matter, crouching over a campfire discussing the philosophies of the enlightened absolutist. The Croats were much more interested in combatting Turkish encroachments upon the Hapsburg's Imperial borders. Likewise, when Montcalm was a Colonel commanding a regiment he battled Piedmontese "Ghost Bands" in 1743-4. He paid

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<sup>6</sup> Duffy, *The Army of Frederick the Great*, p. 18.

closer attention to learning the art of the irregular and to keeping alive.<sup>7</sup> He needed to, for the mountain villages which housed "intensely religious" yet, "superstitious and ferociously cruel" people, could be "mantrap:" to the unwary.<sup>8</sup>

The campaigns fought on the borders of Europe in places like Croatia or in mountain hideaways like those found in Piedmont, frequently provided episodes of the little war, but they rarely found their way into the mainstream of the European Military histories we read in the United States. If we read anything of the campaigns they just sound like more reports of Frederick's grand parades and reviews but with loaded weapons. And somehow the manifestoes of reason, with their inferences to "limited war" and "minor collateral affect" on the civilian population, obscure the fact these wars were for high stakes, could be terribly brutal and in no way resembled a love affair or welcome seduction. This situation filters into most general histories, and even many otherwise reliable military histories of the American Wars. The set piece battle with all its supposed cordiality — "Gentlemen of France may fire first" — has somehow captivated the American mind.<sup>9</sup> What emerged is an

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<sup>7</sup> Robert T. Pell wrote a series of articles for the *Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum*, Vol. 8, nos. 4, 5, 6 and 7 and Vol. 9, no 1, about Montcalm's European experiences. He theorized the command of New France's military was given to Montcalm because of his outstanding reputation as a leader of guerillas in the mountains of Northern Italy during the War of the Austrian Succession.

<sup>8</sup> Pell, "Montcalm: The Ranger Cavalier", *Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum*, (hereafter, "Montcalm Ranger"), vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 41-2.

<sup>9</sup> This is a loose quotation of a remark supposedly uttered by a British Guards officer as his men closed on the awaiting French Guards at Fontenoy in 1745.

attitude that mid-eighteenth century Europeans were all a group of "toy soldiers" who were at a complete loss when faced by the claustrophobic American woods. None of this image is representative of reality and if we are to continue to contrast European and American practices we must begin to take pains to portray them accurately.

We will recall from the first chapter that 1757 found Lord Loudoun placing 'gentleman Volunteers' from the regular regiments to train in Roger's Rangers, and Lieutenant Colonel Gage offering to raise a new battalion of regular light infantry to be dressed in brown and leather and act as rangers - but at the same time - Berlin, capital city of Prussia, was briefly occupied by 3,500 Austrian light troops who had slipped around the King's position and into the city. They got away with a "'contribution' of 215,000 thalers" and left the place largely intact.<sup>10</sup> Frederick was apparently concentrating on the needs of the campaigns that led to his defeat at *Groß-Jägerndorf* by the Russians and victory at Rossbach over the French and Imperialists. The abusive light troops evaded him.

We should not think of the little war as being just a scaled down version of the great battles of Europe. It is more akin to the death-struggles we associate with the "civil war" fought in the Southern Colonies during the American Revolution or the actions of the marauding bands of soldiers of the Thirty Years' War of the

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<sup>10</sup> Duffy, *The Army of Frederick the Great*, p. 175.

seventeenth century.<sup>11</sup> These irregulars developed a mean reputation. For although

"...the creation by all armies of light cavalry and infantry, [with]...the hussars modeled on the Hungarian cavalry[,...]...were considered indispensable by all armies... the Pandours were prone to develop into bands of robbers as they did in the [recent] War of the Austrian Succession (1741-1748)....An abbot, who in the early 1740's saw a band of Bavarian light infantry pass by, described the men as the dregs of the population, having neither uniforms nor shoes. [Consequently] it was a rule never to detach less than twenty men, furnished with a written patent, so that they would not be mistaken for highwaymen."<sup>12</sup>

But how prevalent was the employment of irregulars in the Seven Years' War in Europe? As might be expected, the Hapsburg Empire was the leader in irregular warfare in Europe. Peter Russell sums up their history and shows why the Empire had a different military experience in the early 1700's. Rather than "civilized" Germans, British or French as adversaries:

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<sup>11</sup> Jac Weller, "Irregular but Effective: Partisan Weapons Tactics in the American Revolution Southern Theater", *Military Analysis of the Revolutionary War* pp. 131-44.

<sup>12</sup> Fritz Redlich, *The German Military Enterpriser and His Work Force* (hereafter, *Military Enterpriser*), p. 137.



The Balkans had long been the scene of conflict between the Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires. The Turks and their Asiatic auxiliaries were notoriously savage fighters who knew nothing of Western conventions. They had devastated the mountainous frontier regions of Serbia and Croatia, and the rugged local people's resentment drove many of them into reprisals against the Turks and into allegiance to Austria. When war was renewed in this area in 1737-1739, some 3000 "local irregular troops" fought beside the unsuccessful Austrians, and among those who responded to Maria Theresa's appeal in 1740 were many veterans of this savage conflict.<sup>13</sup>

That the Empire held an immense pool of veteran irregular warriors to draw on was fortunate for it had almost constant need to call them to service.<sup>14</sup> The light troops fell into several different groupings. The three terms, Croat, Grenzer, and Pandour are often used interchangeably despite shades of differences among the terms. It is not necessary to define each term here — we need only understand that the terms all mean light troops. One should envision them as the European equivalent of American rangers. Generally speaking, they inhabited the eastern borders of the Empire and tended to live a frontier lifestyle. They have been described to be

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<sup>13</sup> Peter Russell, "Redcoats in the Wilderness", *William and Mary Quarterly*, no. 4, 1964, p. 631.

<sup>14</sup> Redlich, *Military Enterpriser*, p. 92. Wars of the Hapsburg Empire included: 1673-1698: wars against France and the Turks, 1701-1713: War of the Spanish Succession, 1716-1718: war against the Turks and on Sicily, 1733-1735: War of Polish Succession, 1737-1739: war against the Turks, 1756-1763: Seven Years' War.

"Like American frontiersmen and Indians,... hardy, individualistic, and skilled in skirmishing, ambush, raids and looting."<sup>15</sup>

In 1756, on the eve of the Seven Years' War, the Hapsburg army held 8,000 "regular" hussars, 34,000 Croat infantry, and 6,000 Croat hussars out of a total of just over 200,000 men under arms. The contingent increased as the war continued. These men were to be counted on. Prince Charles de Ligne felt a great attachment to them. He wrote, "'The honor of the army resides in our 60,000 Croats. They never desert. They are sober, obedient, easy to lead, tireless, and as splendid looking as they are proficient.' " <sup>16</sup>

The British were early made familiar with the Croats. During the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) the British fought alongside the Austrian forces of Prince Charles of Lorraine who brought some irregulars with him to Flanders. Marshal Ludwig Andreas von Khevenhuller, an officer on the Prince's staff, commanded a group of 4,000 veteran irregulars. They "began raiding French-held towns and skirmishing with enemy forces in the Low Countries." These irregulars made a lasting and gruesome impression on one Englishman:

"Croats, Pandours, Hussars, etc.... are encamped by themselves, and their looks represent a wild and savage Fierceness. All Night they lie on the Ground without Tents or Straw; in the Day they Dance and exercise with

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<sup>15</sup> Dale Roethig, "The Empire Strikes Back: The Austro-Hungarian Army of the Seven Years' War", *Strategy and Tactics*, (hereafter, "The Empire"), June 1987, no. 112, p. 43.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 43.

running and throwing of Stones of 20 lb weight... They openly declare that when they once get on French Ground, they will give no Quarter either to Man or Child. Yesterday a Body of about 1000... cut in pieces [in a skirmish] some Frenchmen... and brought away their heads."<sup>17</sup>

Their memoirists have frequently compared the European irregulars with native North Americans. The setting of the war played an important role in determining how far the regulars were apt to stray from the tactics, uniforms and equipment associated with the set-piece battle. The more remote, unsettled and harsh an area, the greater degree of variance from regulated practice. Apparently the conditions in America could support such a thesis — rough service, inadequate supply and the fatiguing exigencies of the little war often changed all outward appearances of the "civilized" Englishmen.<sup>18</sup> As early as 1758 Captain John Knox described a group of British soldiers returning from a wood-cutting party as being as ragged as "a detachment of Hungarian or Croatian irregulars... [and] in short they had very little of the British regular about them."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Russell, "Redcoats in the Wilderness", p. 633.

<sup>18</sup> Montcalm's career provides another example. He fought in Flanders in the first years of the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48), taking part in the Battle of Dettingen -- a very conventional battle. But he also operated a guerrilla command in Piedmont -- a very harsh, mountainous country -- from 1743-4 in that war. He combined both styles of combat, conventional and irregular, in his campaigns against the British in the Seven Years' War in North America. See note 7.

<sup>19</sup> Knox, *The Siege of Quebec and the Campaigns in North America 1757-1760* The Folio Society Edition, p. 53.

The "irregular" soldier had become so commonplace that some felt regulations and guidelines regarding his use should be set down in writing.<sup>20</sup> A treatise on the employment of light troops, written in 1756 and translated from the French for the use of the British army in the American Revolution advances an eloquent and simple thesis regarding them. Recalling the conditions existing during "the war concluded at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748," the author declares:

...the utility of light troops proper for the petite guerre, and of the commanders of parties, has been universally acknowledged in all times, and by all nations; the necessity thereof has been more fully proved in our time, by the torrent of light troops, belonging to the Queen of Hungary, which overflowed Bohemia, Bavaria, and Alsatia, at a time when France was unprovided of such.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, after taking steps to improve the art of the little war, the French found in service against the British, who had few light troops, the army "...enjoyed the same quiet in our camps that the Austrians did in Bohemia and Bavaria, therefore the necessity of light troops to oppose an enemy furnished with them, cannot be denied."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Parcy, "Colonial Experience", *BIHR.*, p. 57 notes that "for the period between 1752 and 1800 it is possible to identify fifty titles devoted entirely to the little war,..." He recommends J. G. Hoyer's *Geschichte der Kriegskunst* (Göttingen, 1799-1800) Vol. 2, 865-7, 1088-9 as a "good contemporary bibliography" for these.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis Nicola, (Trans.), *General de Grandmaison on the Military Service of Light Troops, in the Field and in Fortified Places*, (hereafter, *Grandmaison*), p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Due to their early exposure to the "light troops belonging to the Queen of Hungary," the French army had a somewhat longer experience with the *petite guerre* than did the British and Germans. France raised many soldiers for the little war to counter the Austrian threat. Consequently, when British soldiers faced the French during the War of the Austrian Succession, they were harassed by an ever expanding complement of irregulars. To show the chain of causes and effects can be a never-ending cycle; it appears the French addition to their skirmishers was prompted by the Austrians. According to Grandmaison:

...the urgent necessity the Queen of Hungary found herself under during the the last war [against Prussians in Silesia in 1740] obliged her to gather together all she could find in her dominions, even the most barbarous nations [e. g. Croatia], who 'till then, never had any intercourse but with the Turks, and which, in the first campaigns of Bohemia and Bavaria, treated us as such. It was this multitude of people, distinguished by caps, and coats lined with furs of all colors, that obliged us in 1744, and the following years [of the War of the Austrian Succession] to raise the [irregular] regiments of Grassin, la Morliere, the Cantabrians, the volunteers of Britany, Guesreick, and several independent companies, beside an infinite number of detachments that daily marched from the camp.<sup>23</sup>

It was the regiment de Grassin which caused the English right wing such trouble at Fontenoy in 1745. They occupied the Barri wood at the extreme left end of their lines and were so difficult to dislodge that they were able to delay and disorder the English and

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Scottish infantry advancing against them in support of the main attack through the center. Unsupported, that attack became subject to a tremendous cross-fire of artillery that would have been prevented if the delay in Barri Wood had been prevented. Finally, after long enduring this press, the British in center retreated. Their failure in this battle can be partly attributed to the right flank being so long held up by well-placed skirmishers. This is a case when elements of the little war spilled over into a major battle and helped decide the issue. We can be certain many Englishmen and Scotsmen remembered the Barri Wood and were more supportive toward army reforms of the 1750s.

The war to decide the Austrian succession was fought over an eight year span and was therefore long enough to allow all participants to improve their forces for the little war while the war was in progress. France was the first to make major improvements by emulating the Austrian irregulars and a few years later they used them to good effect against the British. The British were not quick enough to counter the French in time for Fontenoy, but by 1745 "his Grace the late Duke of Kingston raised a regiment of light horse for his Majesty's service... to imitate the Hussars in foreign service, to act regularly or irregularly as occasion required."<sup>24</sup> The regiment was used to such good effect at the Battle of Culloden that the Duke of Cumberland obtained permission from his father, King George II, "to raise them as his own regiment of Light Dragoons."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Hinde, *The Discipline of the Light Horse*, (hereafter, *Light Horse*), p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Between the 1740-48 war and the Seven Years' War, a span of only eight years, the European powers worked to improve their strategies in hopes of winning a decisive edge over their rivals. Every country had problems to attend to: Frederick's heavy cavalry had been inadequate against the Austrians; the French haggled over the proper way to employ their heavy infantry which had often lost to the British; The Austrian army adopted a better regulation for their infantry which imitated the Prussian model. Diplomatic circles were buzzing, and great changes were forthcoming as the powers sought a winning combination. Austria abandoned her previous alliance with the British and sided with the Bourbons instead. Britain cast her lot with Prussia as an emerging continental land power. Along with these more obvious rearrangements, rapid changes were emerging in the military as the little war became a popular subject of discourse. Every country had found deficiencies in this arm in the recent war and sought to correct them. Innovation and adaptation begun in the last war were more noticeable in the Seven Years' War. The British army was stirred by the lack of success in the Low Countries battles "...and more so by the fighting in Scotland [during the Jacobite rising of 1745], and by the mid-1750s innovation had gathered momentum."<sup>26</sup>

Innovation in the little war was a major part of the experience of the mid-eighteenth century — innovation spurred by being in greater contact with the fierce auxiliaries of the Hapsburgs and by

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<sup>26</sup> Houlding, *Fit for Service*, p. 368.

doing battle in such inaccessible places as the mountains of Italy. Innovation was more pronounced during the Seven Years' War because everyone recognized the need for more and better light troops. So many were employed, and so many anecdotes are available from the little war, that this chapter must be confined to a narrow area of action for study in depth and just touch on other areas for purposes of comparison.

German auxiliaries, specifically those from Brunswick, were attached both to King George II's army in the Seven Years' War and to King George III's army in the American War for Independence. Such a connection helps to provide a focus for this discussion because we can see if their European experience prepared them for the American campaigns. Their major theaters of operations were in Northwest Germany under Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick in the Seven Years' War and the Champlain Valley in New York under Lieutenant General John Burgoyne in the American war. As a major purpose of this chapter is to understand the European experience prior to fighting in America, it makes sense to concentrate on the armies of Ferdinand and Burgoyne.

These same Brunswick regiments which had fought alongside their Anglo-German allies against the French in western Germany in the Seven Years War joined their British friends to put down rebellion in America. The regiments were little changed in those years. The enlisted men were regular soldiers,... "many of whom had seen service in the Seven Years War...[and] the officers were career



soldiers, most of whom had seen active service."<sup>27</sup> Naturally, many of the soldiers had been replaced by new recruits. The junior officers were promoted to replace their retiring seniors. For example, General Friedrich Adolph Riedesel, the commander of the German contingent in Burgoyne's army, had been a major of hussars in the Brunswick army in the previous war. Riedesel's career is followed in detail because he represents the bridge of experience from the Seven Years' War in Germany to the American War of Independence. In the former, he was a youthful junior officer who learned the art of the little war. When he arrived in America, he was the senior Brunswick officer there. It is no coincidence that his contingent learned the "English Method" in America, while the troops from Hesse-Cassel did not. His experience in European irregular warfare prepared him for American irregular warfare.<sup>28</sup>

The Germans allotted to Lieutenant General John Burgoyne for the 1777 campaign were not Hessian soldiers, like the majority of the Germans serving in America in British pay at that time, although their chief, Major General Baron Friederich Adolfus Riedesel had been in Hessian service in his youth. His men were of the Duchy of Brunswick, or *Braunschweig*, as the inhabitants called their small German state which was neatly tucked between Hanover in the north and Hesse-Cassel, across the Weser river in the south. The Baron was a popular and well-known figure in the army of *Braunschweig*,

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<sup>27</sup> John Mollo, *Uniforms of the American Revolution*, p. 28.

<sup>28</sup> See Chapter Three.

as he had served in it with distinction since his twenty-third year, in 1761. Prior to that he had been a subaltern in the army of the landgrave of Hessa. While attending a school of law in Marburg, the young Riedesel, just fifteen, was attracted to the activity of a Hessian infantry battalion which was garrisoned there. He "soon conceived a strong passion for a military life; and, as a natural consequence, he was oftener seen on the parade ground as a spectator, than at the law school as a listener to the lectures."<sup>29</sup> Riedesel eventually became a vice ensign and was launched on a brilliant military career.

The youth's duties linked him almost immediately and nearly inseparably with the British. Soon after taking the oath, his regiment was taken into their service and sent to England.<sup>30</sup> Finding his prospects there greatly curtailed because he lacked English, he worked diligently to learn that language as well as the French. "In a comparatively short time he could express himself tolerably well in either tongue."<sup>31</sup> He also spent time cultivating the friendship of many English officers. In 1757 the regiment was returned to Germany to join the Allied army which opposed France. The multi-lingual officer was made an aide on Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick's

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<sup>29</sup> Stone, *Riedesel*, Vol. 1, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> This practise followed a long-standing series of precedents. Houlding, *Fit for Service*, p. 323, says the British imported twelve battalions of Hanovarian and eight battalions of Hessian infantry in 1756 to help defend against possible invasion. This had been done in 1715-16, 1719, 1744-46 as well. Taken from Kent RO Amherst MSS 084/6, fo. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Stone, *Memoirs*, p. 3.

personal staff. It was this relationship that put him on a meteoric rise.

Ferdinand won a great victory against a French army which more than doubled his own army's numbers at the Battle of Minden in 1759. For a short while "Minden" was on everyone's lips and anyone associated with it was a hero.<sup>32</sup> But Riedesel earned a special honor at Minden. He had spent the day charging about on the battlefield, delivering messages from Prince Ferdinand to his generals, at great risk to himself. As a reward to his protégé the Duke sent him to the landgrave of Hesse as special messenger with news of the victory. The victor of Minden had added to the end of the official report a request that Riedesel be rewarded by his sovereign. The landgrave agreed and promoted Ensign Riedesel past the ranks of Lieutenant and Captain-Lieutenant straight to a Captaincy in the elite new "Blue" regiment of Hussars.

After two long campaigns, the Captain was very disappointed at having been passed over for further promotion. Seeing little future prospects for himself in the Hessian army, he resigned his commission. Ferdinand would not be without the services of his young hussar, and promptly took him into the service of Brunswick as Lieutenant Colonel of his "Black" Hussars. Not long after that, Bauer's regiment of Hussars was added to his command. The

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<sup>32</sup> Almost everyone, at least. Lord Sackville, "the Coward of Minden" temporarily ruined his reputation at Minden for failing to follow orders and bring up the reserve cavalry which would have destroyed the already defeated French army.

hussars were constantly on patrol, skirmishing with the French, or providing security to the army when on the move.

While serving in this capacity, Riedesel was wounded by a French chasseur's bullet and nearly died.<sup>33</sup> That event drives home a similarity between the War in Germany and the War in America. Nearly twenty years later, Riedesel's comrade in arms, British General Simon Fraser, was killed by a sniper's bullet. In America there was reported a cry of "foul", as the British had never seen an officer sniped at before.

The irregular war on the western front vital to the strategy of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, who took command of the allied army in 1757. His forces included contingents from Great Britain, Hanover, Brunswick, Hesse-Cassel and a small corps from Saxe-Gotha, but were too few to oppose the French on their terms. Ferdinand had a wide front to protect against a more numerous enemy. The following paragraphs show the character of the war was different from the stereotyped eighteenth century battle. These "consummated battles" were all "raids" not "seductions".

The most innovative and successful of Ferdinand's opponents was French commander Charles Francois Broglie, Duc de Ruffec. He was the instrument of Versailles' war aims. These, in simple terms, were to offset inevitable British gains against her colonial empire by beating Britain and her allies on the continent. A similar policy had

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<sup>33</sup> Stone, *Memoirs*, p. 6.

been proven successful in the 1740-1748 war with the English. This time the French, Austrians and their various allies had to beat Frederick the Great's Prussia and Ferdinand's army of British and Germans to offset the losses in New France.

Following these guidelines, France had to take the war to Hanover which would strike a blow at the Elector of Hanover, who was George II, also King of England. There were two major approaches that the French army could follow into Allied territory. The first was formed by the Lippe and Ruhr River valleys into Lippe and Minden which were just east of the Weser River across Hanover and Brunswick. From there a successful French invasion could threaten Prussia. The second option available to the French was to strike northeast from Frankfurt along the Fulda River to Cassel and then on to the cities of Göttingen, Brunswick and Hanover. These two routes were separated by about 100 miles of hilly, sometimes wooded ground, but were also penetrated by several road networks and the rivers mentioned above. The river traffic made available many good points for establishing supply magazines and both routes had good roads for distributing supplies from the rivers. These supply routes were essential for rapid advance and sustained offensives for large forces.

To counter the French aims, Ferdinand was responsible for protecting the territory of his allies and for covering the Prussian flank from a French advance. Hesse-Cassel, Hanover and Brunswick were in a direct line between France and Prussia. The task facing the Prince was to prevent the French forces, which were roughly twice as

numerous as his allied army, from deeply penetrating his lands anywhere along a two-hundred mile frontier. These two considerations, having a long border and a numerous enemy, dictated the style of operations Ferdinand employed against his enemy. The irregular war on the western front was vital to the strategy of Ferdinand.

In this campaign, both the Anglo-Germans and their French enemies were strung along a wide front with detachments scattered to cover all approaches. The Germans and British had extended their lines to prevent the French from turning a flank while the French expanded their line in order to probe for and with luck, to locate an allied flank. With this configuration, the trick to success was to know when and where the enemy planned to attack. As in any war, one seeks to attack a weak part of the enemy's positions with a stronger force. Military theorists call this the principle of "Mass". To achieve "Mass" in this theater, one had to bring in detachments to concentrate the army in one point and then march to the attack. This arrangement would be useless if the enemy knew what he was doing and could counter force with force. A second principle of military theory, "Surprise" considers this situation. Achieving "Surprise" of one's opponent and preventing one's own side from being surprised was the job of the light troops.

In the ten to twenty mile corridor between the lines, "no man's land" if you will, each army maintained scattered pockets of light troops; chasseurs, jägers, hussars, and other cavalry. They had several duties to perform. First, and most important, was to prevent

the enemy patrols from getting detailed knowledge of one's redeployment and alterations made in preparation for an attack. This was done by intercepting and chasing off or killing enemy patrols sent to gather intelligence of the preparations. Simultaneously, other units probed the enemy line for detailed intelligence about his deployment and possibly movements. Of course, any time the light troops were able to bypass all enemy security they would try to reach his lines of communication and destroy supplies bound for the army. These are all within the province of the little war.

A few anecdotes from the campaign will be necessary to convey the flavor of the action. 22 August 1760 was an auspicious day for the Prince. He expected some sharp movements by the opposing commander, Broglie. The French had withdrawn fifteen miles from their original line and had shortened their front by twenty miles, leaving only about forty to cover. Ferdinand knew something was about to happen. That day the chasseurs earned their pay. "The light troops (many of them Hessians with friends in the villages) [were] to watch every track, interrogate every stranger, and capture any messenger or dispatch rider." This was an intensified struggle to pierce the soupy fog of war by securing any information possible. With a considerable degree of luck, and a dose of skill, a patrol penetrated the opposing screen of French pickets and grabbed a dispatch rider. Upon returning with the papers to headquarters they presented Ferdinand with the dispatches. They had procured ". . . not only Broglie's private correspondence with his Duchess, but a

dispatch . . . containing his appreciation of the situation and his plans for the immediate future."<sup>34</sup>

Although the British tended to rely on native light troops to scout their own countryside, they did contribute as they were able to. Two battalions of Scots, Keith's 87th and Campbell's 88th regiments of foot, were raised for the campaigns in Germany to serve as light infantry. They were thought able to endure the hard life of the irregular. The two newly raised battalions were brigaded with two converged grenadier battalions, and the former served as light infantry while the latter marched in close support. It was thought that Scots, with their hardy lifestyle, would be "natural" light troops.<sup>35</sup> The combination of light infantry with solid, heavy infantry support was a practice often repeated in the British army. The light troops could move swiftly while on patrol or skirmishing with enemy outposts and when they were hard-pressed by a determined counter-attack, the grenadiers stepped up and stoutly supported them.

Additionally, the cavalry regiments each raised a troop of light dragoons in 1756, and by 1763, eight new regiments of light dragoons were established.<sup>36</sup> One of these, the Fifteenth Regiment of

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<sup>34</sup> Savory, *Brittanic Army*, p. 250.

<sup>35</sup> If we remember the savage charge of Highlanders at the battle of Falkirk in the '45, as many British officers must have, it is reasonable to think of the Highlanders as irregulars. As we have seen, steady discipline is just as important to the light infantry as the ability to move swiftly through rough country, or shoot accurately.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Barthorp, *British Cavalry Uniforms Since 1660*, (hereafter, *Cavalry*), pp. 42-5. The British 1st, 2nd and 3rd Dragoon Guards; 1st, 2nd, 3rd,



Light Dragoons was transported to the Continent to augment the light cavalry with Ferdinand. Several other light dragoon regiments participated in the expeditionary raids along the French coast from 1757-1761.<sup>37</sup> Lieutenant Colonel John Burgoyne, leading his 16th Light Dragoons, was active in both actions at *Belle Isle* in 1761 and in 1762 earned universal approbation for his inspired raid into *Valentia d'Alacantara* which netted him "a Spanish major-general, several officers of lesser rank, a number of prisoners, three stands of colors, and a large quantity of arms."<sup>38</sup>

Another stop-gap solution to a need for light troops and a most interesting development was the creation of "Fraser's Chasseurs" in 1761. Major Simon Fraser was chosen to lead a battalion formed of volunteers from each British infantry regiment.<sup>39</sup> This corps, which numbered 500 rank and file and served in the last three campaigns, recruited active men who were good woodsmen and hunters. It seems Fraser's Chasseurs may have been inspired by the success of

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7th, 10th and 11th Dragoons Regiments each added a light troop in 1756. "The success of these light troops on the French Coast in 1758 [St. Malo Expedition] led to the raising of the first regiment of Light Dragoons..." The 15th-18th Light Dragoons were raised that year and the 19th-22nd in 1760. Also see P. H. Smitherman, *Cavalry Uniforms of the British Army*, London, 1962 and Hinde, *Light Horse*.

37 W. K. Hackmann, "English Military Expeditions to the Coast of France, 1757-1761", University of Michigan Ph.D. Dissertation 1969.

38 Horatio Rogers, (ed.), *Hadden's Journal and Orderly Books*, (hereafter, *Hadden's*), pp. 392-3.

39 Savory, *Brittanic Army*, p. 368. "'The Chasseurs (or jägers) of the army', [were] under the command of [Lord Frederick] Cavendish. They had been raised from volunteers from the infantry; each battalion on a 'national' basis, i.e. one British (Fraser's Chasseurs), one Hanoverian, one Hessian, and one Brunswick."

their North American cousins, such as Gage's 80th Regiment of light armed foot or Howe's Light infantry, raised four years earlier. Atkinson says "About this time [1760] one hears of 50 men being picked out from each [there were three] battalion of the Guards 'and appointed chasseurs,' a forerunner of the Light Companies which were to be established in 1770 [1771]."<sup>40</sup>

Such an adjustment should not be considered unusual for a European army of the mid-century. It is now evident that Gage's and Howe's men derived their ancestry as much from the European *chasseur*, *jäger*, and especially the Austrian *Pandour* and *Croat* as they did from the American ranger or tribesman. Every army, "civilized" or not; ancient, medieval or modern; whether in Europe or the primeval forests of North America, could hardly do without specialists in patrolling, raiding, intelligence gathering or securing the march route against surprise. The abuse suffered at the hands of an army well-served with light troops could be catastrophic to an army which had no such troops. As we will see below, the King of Prussia's very good hopes for 1758 were dashed by Austrian marauders.

Frederick the Great never was very successful in conducting *der kleine Krieg*, despite his otherwise brilliant military career.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> C. T. Atkinson, "The Highlanders in Westphalia" *The Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol 20, 1941, p. 219. Atkinson's reference to the Guards is probably related to the order to raise Fraser's Chasseurs.

<sup>41</sup> Redlich, *Military Enterpriser*, p. 122, *in passim*. See also Jay Luvaas, (ed. and trans.), *Frederick the Great on the Art of War*, (hereafter, *Frederick the Great*), pp. 88, 148-9, 167, 174, 272.

His army was an important instrument in his many victories, but it was not sufficient to the task of the little war. The Prussian cause looked brightest in 1758. Frederick had pressed hard against the Austrian positions. Following a conventional approach, he recaptured Schweidnitz and drove on to Moravia; the army besieged Olmütz and with success could have advanced on Vienna itself. But the essentials of security and the little war were not maintained, Frederick's hundred-mile line of communications to the nearest magazine was cut by Austrian detachments, and the guardians of an important convoy consisting of 3,000 wagons were beaten, leaving the vital convoy in enemy hands. Without it the King had no option but to lift the siege and withdraw. The attack on his communications, an operation of the little war, had prevented a successful siege, an operation of the conventional war.

We should not think Frederick did not grasp the importance of the little war — he had many opportunities to be reminded of it by the Austrians — but he preferred to ignore it in favor of the grand battle and siege. Although in his later writings on war he gave mention to securing supply columns, protecting forage parties and reconnoitering lines of advance, he never really fully understood the little war. For instance, Frederick writes on forage parties: "Large foraging parties are always escorted by a body of cavalry, the size of which is determined by the proximity and the potential threat of the enemy."<sup>42</sup> His army chose to protect its convoys by providing a

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<sup>42</sup> Luvaas, *Frederick the Great*, p. 112.

large escort and fending off any raiders. This method was tried in Bohemia, but to little effect as we have seen. Escorts could not save the 3,000 wagons bringing supplies to the siege of Olmütz. The Austrians, on the other hand, did not await the enemy and allow him to take the initiative. They protected positions by screening with light troops who prevented raids from penetrating to harass their communications. The Soldier King felt "It is extremely difficult to surprise the Austrians in their camp because of the large number of light troops that surround it."<sup>43</sup>

Frederick thought "EXCELLENT USE could be made of light infantry troops, although those we create will not be of high quality, as new levies, raised in haste, can never be."<sup>44</sup> His answer was to send in the light troops and free corps in advance of the good line troops to serve as cannon fodder. Such squandering of light troops on the large scale battlefield is not their proper use at all. Frederick may have complained of their low quality as new levies, but he had also complained of the cavalry his father left him. He trained and improved it as he should have done with the light troops. Instead of using them in guerrilla warfare, Frederick kept his light troops close to the army and got little use out of them. Luvaas says Frederick the Great "looked with scorn upon the experience of the British regulars in America."<sup>45</sup> He never treated the light troops as they were best used and only considered them as second class line troops.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

In 1756, the first year of the war, Frederick allowed some officers to raise a number of free battalions. By the end of the war he employed twenty-six of these battalions. Frederick's free corps never reached the level of proficiency of Austrian light troops and were often the focus of the Monarch's ire. A few units succeeded in their duty. For instance, one of Prussia's more successful free corps commanders was Viennese Johann Mayr (1716-1759). His military background is marked by some peculiar circumstances. Enlisted in the Austrian service as a common soldier, he rose quickly into the officer corps. After leaving the Austrian army Mayr moved in rapid succession from the Bavarian to the Dutch and then to the Saxon armies. Mayr's inability to hold down a job notwithstanding, Frederick the Great hired him in 1756 and as a Lieutenant Colonel was charged with raising a free corps. This was done and he soon gained infamy by raiding Thuringia and Franconia with such effect that fellow officers considered it an extraordinary accomplishment. Incidentally, drillmaster "Baron" von Steuben of Valley Forge fame had served as this free booter's *aide de camp*.<sup>46</sup>

It is apparent that the great king recognized the value of irregulars but he was unable to produce them in numbers and of a quality which could compete effectively. He was unwilling to deploy those few poor troops as they needed to be.<sup>47</sup> When he had them,

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<sup>46</sup> Redlich, *Military Enterpriser*, p. 139.

<sup>47</sup> See Parct, "Colonial Experience", *BIHR*, Duffy, *The Army of Frederick the Great*, for numbers, effectiveness.

they were wasted as a "dispensable" first line in the grand battle rather than used as an effective security screen. In consequence of this deficiency the Prussians could not even prevent the capital from being raided by enemy guerillas. Instead, Berlin concentrated its efforts on the regular army units, the heavy cavalry, artillery, and especially the heavy infantry which so often saved the day. Historians have often followed this cue and have concentrated on these things too: the large scale battle and siege, much to the detriment of the overall picture of the mid-century wars. The omnipresent irregular is generally ignored. Concentration on the set battle and general ignorance of irregular warfare in Europe is especially noticeable among American historians. Consequently, the lack of aptitude in the little war is often cited as a determining factor in British losses in American campaigns.<sup>48</sup>

We have seen that the British and their German allies were expert in the little war, yet the notion that they were novices persists. Even the British are apparently negligent in the history of their eighteenth century association with the little war. C. I. A. Ritchie laments that the "exploits of ...[Ferdinand's allied army] which to [first Name] Macaulay never existed, have been more glossed over

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<sup>48</sup> This situation filters into many general histories, and even some military histories of the American Wars. One of the most recent, and most glaring, appears in Don Higginbotham's *The War of American Independence*. p. 192. He pokes fun at Burgoyne, saying "Perhaps nothing illustrates Burgoyne's incompetence for a wilderness campaign more vividly than the composition of the the force assigned to Baum, who himself spoke no English,..." This is dealt with in Chapter Three.

more than those of any other British expeditionary force."<sup>49</sup> Since it was this expeditionary force that engaged in the little war, it is no wonder that we do not often hear of it. What we do hear about is the incredibly widespread desire of so many nations to emulate the Prussian army — the Prussian army that failed to appreciate the little war. The next chapter will show that the little war had won over the British army in "customary practice" during the American War for Independence to an even greater degree than Frederick the Great had won over the armchair generals of Europe.

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<sup>49</sup> M. K. and C. I. A. Ritchie, "The Troubles of a Commissary during the Seven Years' War", *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 36, no. 148, Dec 1958, p. 158.

### Chapter III

The first two chapters have depicted the era of the Seven Years' War, both in Germany and America, as being a time of accelerated innovation and adaptation. One major innovation was the vastly expanded use of techniques of the little war to gain large objectives. Wars with the "savage" Turks had imposed a need for good irregulars in the Hapsburg armed service and the border peoples answered the call. These troops were called into action in 1740 when Frederick of Prussia invaded Silesia and the Austrian army found itself hard-pressed. Subsequent actions against the French convinced that country to raise troops for the little war "to make the French camps quiet at night." The British soon found themselves in the same situation and discovered the necessity of light troops, which they raised in ever-increasing numbers. When the Anglo-German army fought the Seven Years' War it was very well supplied with them.

The British contingent sent to America for the Seven Years' War was just as aware of the techniques of the little war as were their brethren in Europe. What emerged from both theaters was a sense of the utility of small unit actions such as was carried out by William Howe or Riedesel. This third chapter tests that sense of utility of small unit actions in the American War for Independence and finds that the small unit action of the little war became even more vital to army objectives than before. For instance, the army



had become affected to such a great extent that to be a successful guerrilla leader had become one of the most promising ways for an officer to seek promotion. To understand the full implication of this situation one must remember officer seniority lists were most jealously and carefully watched to ensure no one jumped ahead on the list. Any new influence on promotion was anathema and carefully scrutinized.

That small unit actions became even more vital to army objectives should not surprise anyone. However, the innovative spirit in the army reached out incredibly far and with radical affect. The very core of the army doctrine was supplanted in the 1770's when the three closed ranks of the infantry battalion opened up and were replaced with two loose ordered ranks. This new order may or may not have been practiced in the recent war against New France, but in the American Revolution it was the standard formation. It was so commonly in effect that extant general orders, orderly books and memoirs continually record the reminders of the commanders that the troops remember to close the files and use bayonets rather than engage in a firefight whenever they caught the rebels in open country.

The most difficult balance to be made in this war was a compromise between the "American scramble" and the European discipline. The "American scramble" referred to the condition an advancing open order line found itself in as it moved through restricting terrain. It did not really hold the shape of a line, because each man moved at a different rate, depending on what he had to

scramble over, but then it was not really a skirmish order either. It looked more like an ocean wave breaking on the beach, linear, but with many ripples. A battalion, loosely configured like this, could run into trouble when faced by a compact party of men who were intent to break them apart with the shock of a charge. The looser body would be forced to withdraw. A logical, if not obvious, compromise was reached. The loose line was always to be supported by some solidly formed reserve which could stave off a stubborn opponent. Now the army had mobility and staying power.

The training cadres at Salisbury and Dublin in 1774 were designed to make the light infantry practice "general" for the entire British army - including the line battalions. And perhaps they were ultimately successful because in the 1775-1783 war British regular line regiments had adopted the loose order two-rank line as their standard formation. Immediately at the start of the war, during the retreat from Concord, the light companies went to work. They were deployed out from the marching column to seize and protect its route of retreat to Boston. Although the army was annoyed during its long retreat, and many men were wounded by American fire, that fire could have been far more effective had it been unmolested by the light companies and come from closer range. The light troops held the militia partially at bay and although unable to disperse the rebels completely, the new companies, still inexperienced and in need of advanced training, did their duty.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Ward, *The War of the Revolution*, (hereafter, *Revolution*), p. 50. The militia's fire was abysmally inaccurate. Out of an estimated minimum of 75,000 shots, only 300 hit. Only one American "marksman" in fifteen hit a

One of the earliest examples of the open order being used in combat during the American Revolution is actually a variation of the open order, being more of an open column of files, and was employed by Sir William Howe at the battle of Bunker Hill in 1776. The most popular image of the assault against the American positions at Bunker Hill is a rather fanciful one. The tightly ordered ranks of grenadiers resolutely stride up the slope against citizen-soldiers watching carefully to glimpse the whites of their eyes. Howe had a different view. Upon landing the first wave of troops, he immediately advanced light companies to outposts near the American lines, but in a safe depression in the ground. His initial plan was to outflank the men defending a fence on the rebels' left and sweep the position from flank and rear. Only after the initial flanking maneuver was repulsed, being unable to force the flank, did Howe revert to a frontal assault. The first two assaults stalled and the men began a sporadic and ineffective fire fight. After the second was hurled back in confusion, fresh troops from the newly arrived 63rd Foot and the second battalion of marines were given the attack order. This one was made in a different manner. First, the men were ordered to leave their knapsacks and other unnecessary gear behind. Lightened, they prepared to attack with bayonet only. Perhaps to prevent the men from slowing the assault by firing, they went forward in column formation rather than in line, thus making fire impracticable. One American recalled, "...The British 'advanced

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target. This seems to indicate the light troops did a better job at fending off the militia than they are generally credited.

in open order, the men often twelve feet apart in the front , but very close after one another in extraordinarily deep or long files. As fast as the front man was shot down, the next stepped into his place; but our men dropt them so fast, they were a long time coming up.' "2 But they did keep coming. An assault in Indian files won the day.

General Howe's preference for the open order was confirmed in the next year's campaign as he prepared to disembark at New York. The army which wintered in Nova Scotia had been augmented in July. On the seventh, as Ensign Glyn reported, the fleet "with 94 sail of Transports having the Guards & six thousand Hessian Troops" arrived across the Atlantic from England "came into sight of land which we found to be ... Nova Scotia just by Halifax Harbour." The fleet, commanded by Commodore Hotham, had cleared the English Channel 9 May and made a reasonably quick passage, despite "Very stormy Weather & a contrary Wind which lasted five Days successively."<sup>3</sup>

This was a welcome reinforcement after the army's depletions around Boston the previous year. It had suffered 1,327 casualties

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Ketchum, *Decisive Day: The Battle of Bunker Hill*, p. 169. Ketchum quotes an American quoted in Henry B. Dawson, (ed.), *The Historical Magazine*, Vol III, 2nd Series, June 1868, no. 6, p. 390. This apparently describes the third attack, as the first two are reported to have been in close order. Ward, *Revolution*, p. 93-4, describes the last assault as being made in column. He does not point out that it was an open column.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Glyn, *The Journal of Thomas Glyn, 1st Regiment of the Foot Guards on the American Service with the Brigade of Guards 1776-1777*, (hereafter, *Glyn's Journal*), pp. 2-4.

during the actions at Concord and Bunker Hill alone.<sup>4</sup> A month later the fleet lay off Staten Island in New York. With the addition of the fleets of Admiral Sir Peter Parker and Admiral Howe, brother of William Howe, the army was reinforced to a total strength of 32,000. The Guards Brigade commander, Brigadier General Mathew, passed on to his brigade the commander-in-chief's orders for the army written at his headquarters 18 August at Dacres Ferry, Staten Island: "The infantry of the army without exception are ordered upon all occasions to form two deep, with the files at 18 inches interval till further orders."<sup>5</sup>

Nearly simultancously, in Canada, Riedesel was writing to his chief back in Brunswick about the same subject. In his translation of Riedesel's *Memoirs*, Max von Eelking wrote: "In a letter of July, 1776, to the Duke of Brunswick, Gen. v. Riedesel complains that Gen. Carleton insisted on the German soldiers being trained, as were his English troops, on the French system of open order in thin lines, and adds that he means to teach his men to secure the shelter and protection of the trees in their advance, just as do the Americans, and be able to meet them fighting in the woods on equal terms."<sup>6</sup> (Emphasis mine.) The Brunswick troops were indeed trained "on the French system" but the word "complain" seems inappropriate in this case. The passage in the introduction to this thesis indicates General

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<sup>4</sup> Ward, *Revolution*, pp. 50,96. He says these had been made up by reinforcements in June and July.

<sup>5</sup> Glyn, *Glyn's Journal*, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Max von Eelking, *The German Allied Troops in the North American War of Independence 1776-1783*, (hereafter, *German Allied Troops*), pp. 270-271.

Riedesel was genuinely pleased to have trained his men in "the English Method" and to flaunt their skill to the British senior staff at La Prairie. He had voluntarily set his men to learning the open formations and "sharp shooting" exercises, and being a talented leader, he did so in a short time. An annoyed subordinate would not give so lavish a banquet to his superiors as Riedesel's of thirty-six covers and twenty-six dishes.

During this exercise that was highlighted by grunting in German and men panting like bloodhounds as they raced through the underbrush, one could hear the same thing in English in another part of the woods. The redcoats worked as hard to prepare for the coming campaign. As was so often the case, they got their fill of advanced training once they reached the field. According to Ensign Thomas Hughes of the 53rd regiment "During this period [from June to November 1776 in Canada] the troops were train'd to the exercise calculated for the woody country of America...."<sup>7</sup> This may have been Howe's system.

Even the non-commissioned officers were consumed by the system. Roger Lamb, who had acted as one of his regiment's representatives in learning Howe's system in 1771, was now a sergeant in the 9th Regiment of Foot. After some time in the field and plenty of opportunity to test his training Lamb found: "...in fighting in the woods the battalion maneuvering and excellency of exercises were found of little value. To prime, load, fire and charge with the bayonet expeditiously were the chief points worthy of

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Hughes, *A Journal by Thomas Hughes*, p. 6.

attention."<sup>8</sup> These same points had been stressed at Howe's training camp at Salisbury.

Even the best plans and intentions are not always carried out, once the actual test is presented. Despite the successful review of Howe's training camp at Salisbury, his new system might not have been adopted by the army if it were not acceptable to the officers in the field. Twenty years earlier, Wolfe had gone so far as to train his men to use the regulation platoon fire at reviews with the intention to use an alternative fire method in the field. Because a similar situation might have arisen in the armies in America, it must demonstrated that Howe's system, or some derivative of the system, was actually used in combat.

Burgoyne's 1777 campaign is ideal for seeing that the American scramble deeply penetrated the army's customary practice only two years into the war.<sup>9</sup> With this campaign we can resume the tale of young Riedesel to see how his martial expertise gained in European wars could be applied in the New World. It was a busy spring in 1777 for the several thousand men preparing to renew the campaign down the Champlain Valley. They would be moving along a water route which would be sometimes difficult to supply,

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<sup>8</sup> Lamb, *Memoir* , p. 200.

<sup>9</sup> No attempt is made to explain the loss of this army or the situation concerning the possible link-up with Howe from the south. See Jane Clark, "Responsibility for the failure of the Burgoyne Campaign" *American Historical Review*, Vol 35, (Apr 1930) pp. 542-559. She concludes there was never a definitive plan to converge on Albany.

especially as the army penetrated deeper into New York or if it left the shores of lake or river.

As has been mentioned, Major General Riedesel commanded a contingent of Germans who were mostly from Brunswick. A treaty had been signed 9 January 1776 at the city of Brunswick which allowed King George III to take 4,300 men into his service. This body included a small general staff, a regiment of Brunswick Dragoons, four regiments of infantry, a battalion of grenadiers formed from the companies of each infantry regiments, and a battalion of light infantry which included one company of Jägers. Riedesel had found their uniforms entirely unserviceable for a harsh year's use and paid £5,000 to get new ones. This should not give the impression of shiny new buttons and stiffly-starched coats as any serviceable cloth soon found its way onto their backs.

Many accounts have noted how inappropriate their issue uniforms might have been in this land of primeval splendor. Perhaps the group most frequently ridiculed for its gear was the Dragoon Regiment von Ludwig. They had been shipped to America completely outfitted for mounted service, but without horses, expecting to get local mounts. This expedient was probably due to the great space required for horses and fodder and the high mortality rate of horses on the long crossing. The well known raid that ended in debacle at Bennington was in part designed to collect horses thought to be available in that region.<sup>10</sup> In this action the

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<sup>10</sup> The plan originally submitted to Burgoyne by Riedesel was not executed. "In a letter to General Burgoyne, Riedesel sketched a plan for making the



dragoons were greatly hampered by heavy cavalry accoutrements, including sabers and high leather boots. They may indeed have been a ridiculous sight at the time, but as they sought mounts, one might expect them to take along the equipment used by horsemen.<sup>11</sup> Of course the dragoons did not ordinarily wear their full regalia on campaign; instead they substituted with American style "overalls".<sup>12</sup>

The rest of the Germans had been issued comfortable clothing to replace their normal clothes. Riedesel states that he procured overalls for all of his men. These were "a loose fitting, high waisted garment that strapped under the instep.... This garment was supplied by the British from salvaged tentage and sails....[and] were usually worn over the waistcoat during campaigns." Popularity of overalls with the men is apparent from the frequent disappearance of tentage.<sup>13</sup> Besides tent canvas, cotton ticking and coarse linen were

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army mobile, by seizing horses for both men and stores, and thus moving rapidly enough to get advantage of its superiority in numbers and equipments.... Baum [was to] secure horses, and a supply of cattle, wagons and food; he needed 1,300 horses in addition to the number to mount Riedesel's dragoons." Eckling, *German Allied Troops*, p. 271.

<sup>11</sup> F. T. Chapman, "The Brunswick Regiment of Dragoons, 1776-1783", *Military Collector and Historian*, (hereafter, *Dragoons*), Vol. 12, no. 1, p. 17, plate 171.

<sup>12</sup> See Albert W. Haarmann, "Notes on the Brunswick Troops in British Service during the American War of Independence 1776-1783" *The Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol 48, no. 195, p. 140; Henry C. Larer, "German Troops with Burgoyne 1776-1777", (hercafter, *German Troops*), *Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum*, Vol 8, no. 1, p. 24; and Chapman, *Dragoons*, p. 17. Eleanor Murray, "The Burgoyne Campaign", *Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum*, Vol. 8, no. 1, p. 18, says the overalls were derived "from observation of the clothing of the inhabitants" but in Stone's *Journal of Captain Pausch*, pp. 93-5 Pausch says his artillerists wore 'long, loose and wide linen overalls, such as the sailors wear.

<sup>13</sup> Larer, *German Troops*, pp. 18-19.

also sewn into trousers. Thereby, the troops entered the field in stripes of brown and white, blue and white or red and white.<sup>14</sup>

The Light infantry Battalion von Barner had no need to make over its equipment or uniform. The corps had four companies of light infantrymen and a company of jägers. The jägers were an "elite corps of select rangers and marksmen, predominantly sons of German State-Forest Rangers."<sup>15</sup> Each man held a finely crafted, short hunting rifle and a short straight-bladed sword, called a hanger. He wore lightweight but durable buff-colored leather breeches and gloves, a forest green coat and waistcoat, and his leggings, belts, straps and other equipment were of dark leather. The officers were clothed and equipped in a similar manner except they substituted good, soft-legged boots for the leggings of their men. Like the jägers, the four companies of light infantry, or chasseurs, were armed with short German rifles and hangers.

The scrambling around in the woods that Riedesel put his troops though noted in the Introduction is much less comical to imagine with the men dressed in comfortable, loose clothing instead of the severely tailored coats used by the soldiers of Frederick the Great. Clothed and trained like good English light infantry, the army set out to master the north country. For this task Burgoyne could

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<sup>14</sup> The best source for these uniforms is a contemporary watercolor found in a copy of Riedesel's *Memoirs* in the New York Public Library. The Brunswick troops are shown wearing striped trousers.

<sup>15</sup> Larter, *German Troops*, p. 14.

count on about 3,700 British and 3,000 German rank and file, 350 artillerists, 250 Loyal Canadians commanded by Captains Monin, Mckay and Boucherville, 400 Indians under St. Luc La Corne, and the provincial corps of Peters and Jessop.<sup>16</sup> The red coated battalions included the entire complements of the 9th, 20th, 21st, 24th, 47th, and 62nd regiments, plus the flank companies from the 29th, 31st, 34th and 53rd.<sup>17</sup> To batter down the walls of Fort Ticonderoga, a siege train of 128 guns was included in the expedition. Had they not been floated down the waterways in boats, the moving of this train would have been an insurmountable burden. As it was, the portages were back-breaking work.

The forces were organized into several bodies that acted either in concert or independently as was needed throughout the campaign. The advance guard consisted of the grenadiers and light infantry of the ten regiments listed above and the 24th regiment of foot, under Brigadier General Fraser's command. They were joined by a reinforcement of Canadian companies of Monin and Boucherville, Captain Fraser's marksmen and some Indians the 20th of June 1777. The advance guard was allocated such artillery as was suitable for rapid movements. From the large artillery train, Fraser was given four light six-pounders and four light three-pounders. The latter

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<sup>16</sup> Anon, "A Journal of Carleton's and Burgoyne's Campaign, 1776-1777" (hereafter, "Carleton's and Burgoyne's"), *Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum*, Vol 9, no. 5, p. 262.

<sup>17</sup> Since 1771-1772 the British and Irish regiments were each composed of ten companies of soldiers, eight "center" or "hat" companies a light infantry company and a grenadier company.

were specially made to be carried on horseback.<sup>18</sup> The first British brigade included the 9th, 47th and 53rd regiments, and went to Brigadier General Powell. The second British brigade held the 20th, 21st, and 62nd regiments, under Brigadier General Hamilton. Together, these two "brigades formed the right wing of the army, under the inspection of Major General Phillips.<sup>19</sup> The left wing was composed of the Germans and was commanded by Riedesel. The first brigade was composed of the Rhetz, Specht, and Riedesel Regiments, under Brigadier General Specht, while the second brigade, composed of the Hesse Hanau and Prince Frederick Regiments was under Brigadier General Gall. The reserve consisted of the Breymann's German Grenadiers, Barner's Light infantry, and the Brunswick Dragoons, all commanded by Breymann.

Conspicuously lacking was the large number of loyalists or Indians needed to provide march security and guides for the army. Perhaps the lack was not noticed too sharply - as we have seen, natives were not always preferred to regulars trained in the service. This may help to account for the extra diligence applied to the task of training the line units to operate in the woods. Special wide-ranging soldiers were still badly needed. With this in mind Lieutenant General Carleton had ordered each British center company to contribute active men who were good marksmen to Captain Fraser to form a special corps of marksmen. Fraser's marksmen served as

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<sup>18</sup> Murray, "The Burgoyne Campaign", p. 7.

<sup>19</sup> Anon, "Carleton's and Burgoyne's", pp. 259-60.

rangers and led the advance guard of the army. Almost a year later, the marksmen, in need of replacements after the losses sustained at Bennington,<sup>20</sup> were augmented by a new draft.<sup>21</sup> Another such ranger corps was added, this time drawn from the advance guard units. Captain Petrie's Marksmen were "formed composed of 2 men p. Comp from the [British] Grenadier, and Lt. Infantry Battalion, and 24th Regt....The officers appointed to said company were - Captn. Petrie of the 21st Lt. infantry - Lt Crane of the 62nd Grenadiers - Lt French of the 47th Lt Infantry -"<sup>22</sup>

Burgoyne's forces certainly maintained in the field the system they had drilled so diligently to perfect. In fact, the entire army operated according to Howe's plans for the light infantry. The enthusiasm must have carried through so strongly as to become customary practice. Even the shape and size of the army's camp were affected. According to one officer's journal:

...The camp will always be extended as widely as the ground will admit, for the sake of cleanliness, and of health, but as it must often happen that the extent will be insufficient for the line to form in front of the encampment according to the present established rule of

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 334-5. After Bennington (16 August 1777) many men were scattered or lost, 'particularly of Capt Fraser's company of Rangers, of which 5 only are come in.'

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 12, no. 1, pp. 13-14. "Captain Fraser's Company of Marksmen is augmented with one NCO, and 16 privates from each British Regt. of the line, the 53rd excepted....2 from each company, and chosen according to the order of last year - dated 6th Sept."

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 12, no. 1, p. 9.

open files, and two deep, the Quarter Master General will therefore mark at every new camp the portion of ground each battalion is to clear over and above its own front, in order to make the work equal.<sup>23</sup>

The manuscripts of the veterans of the expedition from Canada depict a group of men that was always vigilant and active, always looking to improve its abilities. Spring training of 1777 and training under Carleton's direction the previous year had made them well suited for action, but the hardships the army might face on campaign always loomed above for all to see. Consequently, hardly a moment was lost in learning better methods and honing already sharp skills. A standing order of 20 June 1777 had both wings of the army, German and British, working together at drill. They were to "be exercised [together] in marching, and charging with bayonets,... in order that the British and German troops may acquire an uniformity of pace and motion, when acting together in line."<sup>24</sup>

Burgoyne warned his officers to be always on their guard, especially officers commanding outposts and detachments. He ordered them to:

"constantly to fortify in the best manner the circumstances of the place and the implements at hand will permit; felling trees with their points outwards, barricading churches and houses, breast works of earth, and timber are generally to be effected in a short time,

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 11, no. 5, p. 265.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

and the science of engineering is not necessary to apply such resources."<sup>25</sup>

The commander also warned his men to be ever vigilant for the enemy, though he "is infinitely inferior to the King's troops in open space and hardy combat, [he] is well fitted by disposition, and the practice for the stratagems, and enterprises of the little war."<sup>26</sup> As we will see in Chapter Four, British officers were very well read in military affairs. In fact, Burgoyne's advice to his officers sounds very much like an extract, or at least a paraphrasing, of Roger Stevenson's, *Military Instructions for Officers detached in the Field: Containing a scheme for forming A Corps of a Partisan*, which had been published in 1770.

Burgoyne's army had taken many intelligent precautions to improve its chance of success. A few of these precautions had been noted as standing orders for the army or were commented on in diaries and memoirs. To prevent the army from being surprised, a method was devised to signal for immediate embarkation in the bateaux or for sudden movement without the boats. Two cannon shots signaled the former while four signaled the latter. Each man was required to have on hand or in company strong boxes 100 rounds of ammunition, ready to be used in an extended engagement or firefight. Even though the men had to be constantly reminded to use their bayonets, marksmanship was also emphasized. Even the

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 264. These instructions are reminiscent of Stevenson's guide. (See Below).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 264.

way the army baked its bread changed. Instead of large, "portable" brick ovens to serve the army that had to be built and rebuilt as the camp moved along its route, the men were taught to bake their bread on hot stones. On 24 June 1777, 'The Lieutenant General... observed with satisfaction, that some corps have got the art of making flour cakes with out ovens,...the movements of the army will be too quick to admit a possibility of constructing ovens.'<sup>27</sup>

Burgoyne's army, then, was a corps whose character was punctuated by its desire and ability to adapt to the environment in which it operated. The awkward rigid files of the three-rank line used in parade were not the common practice. Instead, a loose, mobile wave of two ranks swarmed through dense forests and negotiated steep hills. The men were good shots with their muskets at a reasonable range and capable in their duty. The individual private began to develop a sense of self reliance that he might not have felt before.<sup>28</sup> The hunters of the army, whether Petrie's or Fraser's Marksmen, the Indians they worked with, the Canadian rangers or even the State Foresters' sons of Brunswick, could hold their own in the forest. Still, regardless of how proficient the soldiers

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 11, no. 6, p. 307.

<sup>28</sup> Information concerning the alterations made to regulation practice of uniforming, equipment and tactics is routinely available in the various manuscripts of the war. Most of these sources are the same ones used in the general accounts interested in the traditional military history topics, such as the flow of battles and decisions of Generals. However, the items germane to this paper are not obvious if one is not looking for them. A few journals consulted here have not often been consulted for the above types of histories but are essential in developing this thesis. *Glyn's Journal* and the anonymous, "Carleton's and Burgoyne's", provide passages which force the issue to jump out at the researcher.



of the little war became, whenever possible loose files would close up and the army would resort to a deadly charge with bayonet. This tactic had forced the American irregulars to admit the need for something solid to back them up and for a better disciplined approach to war.

A few more examples will show that not only Burgoyne's contingent but the rest of the army was also swept up by this American scramble as well. General Clinton confirmed the open order two-rank line was retained in the army which fell to him to command in 1778. His written memories of the open order were often negative, sometimes neutral, and rarely enthusiastic. "We have succeeded always [with it]; the enemy have adopted it; they have no cavalry to employ against it." According to the editor of his papers, Clinton "had disapproved, particularly of the two-deep line, and had trembled for the consequences. On coming to the command, however, he had decided to retain the familiar line but guard against its dangers. That was accomplished by "always supporting it with something solid." In *The American Rebellion*, the tactical situation being described illustrated what Clinton meant by "something solid." "The [solid] Hessian Grenadiers supported the advanced elements, which in turn supported the light troops making the assault [at the Battle of Monmouth]." <sup>29</sup>

Clinton was not quite so charitable toward the open order when he reviewed the disaster suffered by Lieutenant Colonel

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<sup>29</sup> William B. Willcox, (ed.) *The American Rebellion*, p. 95, n. 16.

Tarleton at the Battle of the Cowpens in 1781. The usually successful and highly regarded legion commander was thoroughly beaten by Morgan's men at this battle.<sup>30</sup> Clinton wrote: "Victory ... was suddenly wrested from him by an unexpected fire from the Continentals while the King's troops were charging and sustaining [it] in that loose, flimsy order which had ever been too much the practice in America, whereby his whole corps was thrown into a shameful confusion from which afterward they could never be recovered."<sup>31</sup> Clinton was not completely behind the loose order as we might expect Howe to have been, yet Clinton maintained the practice when he was put in command as the latter returned to England. Such a situation could infer the system was deeply entrenched as early as 8 May 1778, the day Clinton superseded Howe in the command.

As in the last war in America, uniforms were altered. Burgoyne, for instance, rode at the head of an army in patchwork uniforms. The men probably cut their coats down into jackets as Viscount Augustus Howe's had done a generation before. Officers were ordered without exception to remove all lace and badges of rank to make them less conspicuous targets. Such attacks from the seamstress might have been a reaction to the close country the men had to march and fight in during the hot summer months or the difficulty of supplying new uniform coats as the old ones wore out.

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<sup>30</sup> A "legion" is a corps (often under independent command) comprised of cavalry and infantry with artillery support. Some examples include Tarleton's Legion and the Queen's Rangers for the Crown troops and Lee's Legion and Lauzon's Legion for the rebels and their French allies.

<sup>31</sup> William B. Willcox, (ed.) *The American Rebellion*, p. 247.

Instead of a new uniform, the old ones could be patched from scraps made by shortening the coats.

Necessity may have been the only reason to reduce the coats in Burgoyne's army, but these conditions of poor supply were not important to Mathew's Brigade of Guards that landed at Staten Island in 1776. They campaigned near supply points in the Middle States and fought in relatively open country and had less trouble getting equipment and clothing. What possible reason could cause the British Guards Brigade, the flower of the army, the most exclusive military unit, to tuck and trim their uniforms as well?

Ensign Glyn records not only a tuck and trim, but a wholecloth revision to the look of His Majesty's Guardsmen. Dawn of the 14th of August 1776 found them still aboard transports off Staten Island, New York. Brigade order issued that day read "The Battalion [center] Companys will cut their hats round and sow [sic] on the Lace again; one flap to stand up and the other two to be down....The Canteens, Haversacks, and a Blanket per man to be in readiness to be delivered at the shortest Notice."<sup>32</sup> The order to resew the hat lace was later rescinded. "The hats to be cut round, but not laced again & to be bound with black ferret if it can be procured."<sup>33</sup> The Brigade orderly book confirms some of these changes and includes others not mentioned by Glyn. It records the canteens, haversacks and blanket of the 14 August order but also includes "Trousers..., to be

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<sup>32</sup> Glyn, *Glyn's Journal*, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

got in readiness."<sup>34</sup> To cover their backs the men would have less material. '...The Coats [were] to be Cut after a pattern to be seen on board the Royal George till 4 oclock this [18 August] Evening....The Epaulets & Shoulder Straps to be Plain blue According to a pattern to be seen."<sup>35</sup> These coats must have been dull indeed, as the order had been given just the day before so "The lace may be taken off the offrs and Private Men's Coats when it can be conveniently Done." Sitting aboard a transport is not usually considered an active pursuit, so we may guess time was found to carry out this order.

The elite Guards Brigade must have cut a striking figure as it disembarked for the Long Island campaign. They were all in plain, cut-down red coats with no lace, trousers, and round, short brimmed hats. Their equipment hung about them in a new configuration. "Bayonets to be carried fixed to the *Mens pouches according to a pattern... [seen] on board the Aeolus Transport, the waist belts... [were] stowed in a dry Place,...[and] the ammunition,... Sixty Rounds of Powder,...carried tied in small parcels in Bladders Canvas or other small Bags with which the Companies must provide themselves forthwith."36 Suitably clothed and equipped, the brigade demonstrated its proficiency in many campaigns throughout the balance of the conflict.*

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<sup>34</sup> Anon., "British Regiment of Foot Guards, New York and New Jersey", (hereafter, "Guards Orderly Book"), *Early American Orderly Books 1748-1817*, no. 37, reel 3, 14 August 1776.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 August 1776.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 August 1776.

To be a junior officer in the prestigious guard was both a career builder and a massive expense. Guard Captains were equal in rank to Lieutenant Colonels in the line regiments. The army frequently took its cue from the practices of the Guard and generally offered it more sway than other corps.<sup>37</sup> The surest way to field grade rank was a commission in the Guards. But in this war there was a new alternative for quick promotion for an extraordinarily able officer who had too little money to get a posting to the expensive guards. For a talented, ambitious man the next best thing to money was to be noticed by a senior officer, the higher the better, and hope to be recommended for preferment. The best opportunity for notice could be found in command of some independent corps detached for the little war.

It is not coincidental that the careers of several young officers who served as independent leaders of partisans or other light troops rose at a rate far above their fellows in the line battalions. The publicity and opportunities afforded men in these positions took hold of the imagination of many young officers, who wished to emulate these heroes, but publicity held a clouded side as well. For every rapidly rising star there had to be a dozen passed-over officers of average talents and luck. One end result was a great deal of jealousy in the officer corps which did not end with the war.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> For instance, the 1764 drill manual was probably adopted as a result of the second battalion of Scots Guard's exercise used in Germany in the late 1760s. F. Maurice, *The History of the Scots Guards*, Vol. 1, pp. 161-2.

<sup>38</sup> See section on Dundas in Chapter Four.

John Graves Simcoe joined the 35th Regiment of Foot in 1771 as an ensign. He was nineteen years old. Being an ambitious and eager officer, he may have been disappointed to miss the Battle of Bunker Hill, having arrived in Boston that day. Such ill timing proved but a temporary setback, and when the fleet sailed from Halifax, Nova Scotia to Staten Island for the 1776 campaign, Simcoe had already purchased the captaincy of the 40th regiment's grenadier company. It was while commanding the company at the battle of Brandywine that he received his first of three wounds of the war.

For such a young captain, the prospects of promotion may have looked dim. There were very few regular Majorities available in the army, and the next rank up was that of lieutenant colonel which was usually reserved for battalion commanders. There were many more captains than majors or lieutenant colonels and each was hoping for one of those coveted field grade ranks. Thus, as Simcoe stood near the bottom of the captains' seniority list, he stood little chance of rising very quickly. The best alternative to a slow ascent along the list was to seek a brevet promotion to independent command of some provincial unit. As early as 1775 young Simcoe had made the acquaintance of many loyalists who were in Boston. These men suggested the practicability of raising the King's men from the colonies, whenever the country could be opened for such a purpose. This idea apparently lodged firmly in Simcoe's mind, as he soon requested "his intimate connection," Admiral Graves, to intercede with General Gage to allow him to "enlist such negroes as were in Boston," and engage the enemy from Rhode Island, where

Sir James Wallace was opposing the rebels. Gage turned down the request, preferring to employ him elsewhere.

Undaunted by his failure to gain preferment that year, in 1776, as the army was first landing at Staten Island, he found himself a few hours late and was unable to secure the vacant command of the Queen's Rangers, a green-clad loyalist corps. Still eager for an independent posting, he left his name with Howe's *aide de camp* with hopes the man could remind the General that he was the man for a command in a corps of partisans, should one arise.<sup>39</sup> Simcoe had played every card he could conjure to obtain his desire but the time was not right. He failed for the moment and had to settle for a "common rotation" with the regulars for the campaign.

Of course, Simcoe eventually became the renowned Lieutenant Colonel Simcoe of the Queen's Rangers, but he spent considerable effort and time arranging for such a chance. On 15 October 1777 Sir William Howe appointed him to the rangers as Major Commandant. Although a major and commander of an independent corps, Simcoe still held the rank of captain in the regular army, and it would be a captain he would revert to when the war ended. But it was an independent command that many ambitious officers placed their stakes on. Independence meant chance for notice, recognition and possible promotion over the heads of the crowd. In an army which based permanent promotion quite strictly on seniority, preferment

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<sup>39</sup> John G. Simcoe, *Simcoe's Military Journal: A History of a Partisan Corps, Called the Queen's Rangers, Commanded by Lieut. Col. J. G. Simcoe, During the War of the American Revolution*, (hereafter, *Simcoe's Journal*), pp. 12-15.

and influence by some senior officer was almost essential if one wished to bypass the slow route and be promoted ahead of schedule.

Nevertheless, Clinton sought preferment for Simcoe, and his two other favorites, Banestre Tarleton and Patrick Ferguson. These two were also very capable partisan leaders with records and achievements similar to Simcoe's. All three held provincial rank of lieutenant colonel but their army rank was only captain.<sup>40</sup>

In 1779 ... on the 4th of July, Clinton wrote that Ferguson, along with Simcoe and Tarleton, had distinguished themselves in so particular a manner on many occasions in this war that he recommended them to [Lord George] Germain's good offices, and hope the King would confer the [permanent] rank of major in the army upon them. Germain...had consulted [Commander-in-Chief of the British army] Amherst ... [about] how far it would affect the captains of the Army... There were no less than about thirty captains older [in service] than him, and some hundreds older than the others.... Many of these elder captains... would be severely mortified by such preference.<sup>41</sup>

Another possibility was available. If his provincial corps performed particularly well and gained great notoriety, perhaps the King would allow it to be added to the regular establishment. If this were done, the officers would probably be given rank in the army equal to their provincial rank.<sup>42</sup> This last possibility proved the best

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<sup>40</sup> This double rank situation was quite common in the army. A Captain in the Guards Brigade was equal to a Lieutenant Colonel in a line outfit. Frequently artillery officers held higher army rank than their artillery rank.

<sup>41</sup> Robson, "British Light Infantry", p. 218.

<sup>42</sup> This action had been taken once before in the Seven Years' War when some provincial regiments were added to the regular establishment. See chapter



one for with the help of Sir Henry Clinton after he returned to England, on 25 December 1782 the rangers were added to the British army and all the officers were granted "that rank universally permanent which they had hitherto held only in the scene of action, America."<sup>43</sup> When the corps was stood down at the end of the war, its officers were able to maintain their rank as any other British officers would. Significantly, this could allow transfer to another regiment for continued service in some cases, or at least half pay for a pension.

Simcoe and others had sought out partisan command for good reason. It seems the commanders of such troops were generally more successful than their fellows in the "common rotation" of the line battalions when it came to preferment and promotion. But there was a down side to all of this. The name "partisan" was not associated with instant approbation and good connotations. It still attached to itself a certain stigma. "Common opinion had imprinted on the partisan the most dishonourable stain, and associated the idea with that of dishonesty, rapine and falsehood."<sup>44</sup> However, a command such as this had meant an opportunity for self-reliance and rapid decision-making with important consequences - the very stuff that a future high office had depended on. The introduction to

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one for Gorham's rangers for example. The 60th Royal Americans were added to the regular establishment during the Seven Years' War and after the conclusion of the war it was kept active even though many other regiments raised in Britain were stood down.

<sup>43</sup> Simcoe, *Simcoe's Journal*, n. 259.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. vii, 13. This opinion was gained in Germany, due to such acts as those mentioned in Chapter Two.

the *Operations of the Queen's Rangers* reflected this mode of thought and provides insight into what Simcoe might have been thinking as he embarked on the career of a partisan:

The command of a light corps, or, as it is termed, the service of a partisan, is generally esteemed the best mode of instruction for those who aim at higher stations; as it gives an opportunity of exemplifying professional acquisitions, fixes the habit of self-dependence for resources, and obliges to that prompt decision which in the common rotation of duty subordinate officers can seldom exhibit, yet without which none can be qualified for any trust of importance.<sup>45</sup>

The incorporation and subsequent additions made to the Queen's Rangers will help the reader understand the great flexibility available in these provincial corps. Not on the regular establishment, they were able to adapt and change with little hindrance from regulation and problems associated with the bureaucracy. The Queen's Rangers were created soon after 16 August 1776 when Robert Rogers was authorized to raise a provincial regiment from among the loyalist farmers and city folk living in New York and Connecticut. Though it bore the ranger title, and was at first commanded by Rogers, the corps was in no way a descendent of His Majesty's Independent Companies of American Rangers, who were so active in the Seven Years' War.

In the year after Rogers left the corps, the rangers went through two commanding officers before Simcoe stepped into command for the balance of the war. The rangers did not have a

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

particularly good record prior to the Battle of Brandywine. At that battle the unit suffered terribly, taking one-third casualties, and fourteen of twenty-one officers were killed or wounded. These positions were all filled from within the regiment. Major James Wemyss, the third commander, was wounded at Germantown and replaced by Simcoe. He felt the unit was vibrant and moving along toward becoming an *elite* corps at that time and all he need do was preserve this growing attitude. The officers were young and active, "full of love of the service,...and looking forward to obtain, through their actions, the honor of being enrolled with the British army."<sup>46</sup>

The rangers were for the most part loyal Americans, many of whom had deserted from the Continental army and consequently were subject to severe penalty if they were captured by the enemy. These men had been exiled from their homes due to their attachment to the Royal cause and were thereby in a situation which made them dependent on the care of their officers. Simple imprisonment could be endured but their fate would be death.

The Queen's Rangers were eventually augmented with all variety of troops. When the unit surrendered with Cornwallis at Yorktown, the rangers were actually a legion. It consisted of eleven companies of foot, including one each of grenadiers, riflemen, light infantry, and even Highlanders from the Carolinas. It also had light dragoons, hussars, an amuzette, and a three-pounder (light guns). As this was a light formation, it seldom was off duty long enough to perform the manual of arms according to regulation. Instead the

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-9.

men exercised in the use of the bayonet and practiced firing at marks. The rangers were often supported by British light infantry and German jägers who performed a similar duty. When the army made a major advance to a distant point, the rangers, light infantry, and jägers led the columns, providing march security.

The line troops, already operating in the loose two-rank formations, were developing a trend that was not considered advantageous by some. They had to be continually reminded to use the bayonet in a close formation in open country. The problem was not usually very severe because the troops from Hesse Cassel and Hesse Hanau maintained their tight ranks in the campaigns in the Middle States. They usually provided the firm support Clinton had written about. But when Major General Phillips arrived at Portsmouth, Virginia on 27 March 1781 to take command from Brigadier General Arnold, he had no "Hessians". His contingent consisted of a force of British and loyalist troops which included Simcoe's rangers. Something had to be done. The General issued these orders in preparation for his mission to sweep through and destroy some American supplies in the area:

'It is the Major General's wish, that the troops under his command may practice forming from two to three and to four deep; and that they should be accustomed to charge in all those orders. In the latter orders, of the three and four deep, the files will, in course be closer, so as to render a charge of the greatest force. The Major General also recommends to regiments the practice of dividing the battalions, by wings or otherwise, so that one line may support the other when an attack is supposed; and when a retreat is supposed, that the first line may retreat through the intervals of the second, the second doubling

up its divisions for that purpose, and forming up again in order to check the enemy who may be supposed to have pressed the first line. The Major General would approve also of one division of a battalion attacking in the common open order of two deep, to be supported by the other compact division as a second line, in a charging order of three or four deep. The gaining the flanks also of a supposed enemy, by the quick movements of a division in common open order, while the compact division advances to a charge; and such other evolutions, as may lead the regiments to a custom of depending on and mutually supporting each other; so that should one part be pressed or broken, it may be accustomed to form again without confusion, under the protection of a second line, or any regular formed division.' These orders, so proper in themselves, and now particularly useful, as no Hessian [line] troops who usually form the firm and second line to the British, were to embark on the expedition,...<sup>47</sup>

Phillips' orders represent the results of his five years experience which began in Canada in 1776. His was a logical solution to the lack of close order Hessians — the troops must be trained in a way that was flexible enough to prepare them for all situations. They should fight equally well in skirmish, open or close order. This was the marriage of the American scramble and European discipline. Through the hard years of battle the army had learned, not from regulations but from accumulated service. It took those methods that worked and bound them into what became a customary practice. These experiences taught General Phillips, and perhaps he was not alone in his conclusions, that armies must employ both the skirmishing light infantryman and hard-boiled

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 187-8.

grenadier and keep its options varied so as to treat more effectively any potential foe.

The situation is quite ironic as the American army echoed the feeling that a combination of close and open troops was ideal.<sup>48</sup> Just as Clinton liked to have something "solid" to support his loose files, Americans felt the need for good, stout bayonet men to back up their irregulars. A rifle-armed unit was no good once a determined foe got in close with cold steel. The rifle's slow rate of fire and lack of a bayonet accounted for this deficiency. The most acceptable tactical solution to such a weakness had been adopted early in the war by the invaders; their rifle-armed German jägers were always backed up by musket and bayonet-armed light infantry or grenadier companies. Following this practice seemed reasonable and even the much touted Morgan's Riflemen needed musketeers to support them. Consequently, in the Saratoga Campaign of September through October 1777, Dearborn's regiment of light infantry was created by drawing a few of the best men from each of the regular regiments. They were brigaded with Morgan's. The riflemen, with their accurate fire, screened the musketeers who, in turn, backed them up when pressed by British bayonets. Throughout the ensuing campaign this combined unit was very effective against the Europeans.

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<sup>48</sup> Actually, Washington's Continental army sought to emulate the British army in most of its procedures. See James Kirby Martin and Mark Edward Lender, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic, 1763-1789*, (hereafter, *A Respectable Army*). Also, Clinton wrote "the enemy have adopted it" meaning the open order. William B. Willcox, (ed.), *The American Rebellion*, p. 95, n. 16.

Just as the British and their auxiliaries had learned to depend on light troops to support the heavy ones in the 1740s, the Continental army discovered the need for a disciplined heavy infantry to support their light units. The answer to the American scramble for redcoat and rebel alike became a solid second line of support capable of sustaining the fluid, yet fragile light troops. Every battalion must be made capable of operating in skirmish order to screen and cover, in open ranks to move well and deliver accurate fire, and in a massed body to punish the enemy with a bayonet charge. The watchword for the army might have been "flexibility".

At the end of the war the army returned home to a great debate about its future. The army showed its fatigue. Many regiments were at skeletal strength, worn out and wearing uniforms that resembled patch-work quilts. In general, the irregularity learned in America held even the line battalions in its grasp. The army had developed its practices on an ad hoc basis as it did not follow the regulated drill. As a result it had no universal regulation to maintain uniformity throughout the army. "At these [post AWI] ...reviews [due to a lack of numbers] the battalion would take upon itself the role of a full brigade or wing; the flank companies detached and went through all manner of skirmishing, flanking movements, and assaults while the battalion-companies broke into penny-packets and rather than maneuvering as a solid and steady firing-line, either acted as a reserve to the busy and mobile flank companies or joined

with them in rushing about the field.<sup>49</sup> The concept universally held was that "proper direction was not given...and that we concluded [the camp] as we began, leaving every one in a great measure to follow his own mode and imagination."<sup>50</sup>

But the army also brought home an unparalleled opportunity to pursue the science of the little war. Its many provisional units, especially the very well trained and disciplined legions of Tarleton and Simcoe, showed one direction the British army could take to continue this opportunity. Simcoe was a leading advocate for adding legions to the regular establishment. He did not think wartime improvisation provided the army with troops that were sufficiently skilled in the little war. His own rangers had been created and nurtured by his own great efforts. He had had to fight for promotions, men and artillery. After the war Simcoe wanted new legions to be raised and trained as a part of the normal establishment with all of the rights and privileges of regular units. The new corps needed elite status to complement its elite performance. And in a letter to the King he unsuccessfully "pleaded for a special corps of infantry and cavalry, with supporting artillery, to be commanded by one of the King's sons."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Houlding, *Fit for Service*, p. 239.

<sup>50</sup> David Dundas, *Principles of Military Movements, Chiefly Applied to Infantry*, (hereafter, *Military Movements*), p. ii.

<sup>51</sup> Robson, "British Light Infantry", p. 222.



Colonel David Dundas is usually presented as an opponent of the light troops. He was not. His *Principles of Military Movement Chiefly Applied to the Infantry* is a call to restore uniformity in drill and clothing to the army. Dundas did not oppose all use of light troops. He opposed allowing the heavy infantry to continue to use light tactics now that the army was back in Europe. This shade of meaning can only be grasped if we understand that the entire army in the colonies had adopted the light infantry order. Dundas understood this when he feared that order would not hold up to a European army that was determined and disciplined and well supplied with heavy cavalry. He did favor the continued use of the light infantry and cavalry as an adjunct to the heavy troops. Colonel Dundas' *Principles of Military Movements* is confusing unless the reader realizes the entire army had adopted the light order. In any other context, its full text makes little sense and is contradictory. The interpretation that Dundas opposed the light infantry is valid only when taken out of the total context of the document. To demonstrate this point, it is necessary to provide the entire text. The section usually referred to as showing his opposition to the light troops is underlined:

The importance also which the light infantry have acquired, has more particularly tended to establish this practise. During the late war, their service was conspicuous, and their gallantry and exertions have met with merited applause. — But instead of being considered as an accessory to the battalion, they have become the principal feature of our army, and have almost put grenadiers out of fashion. The showy exercise, the airy dress, the independent modes which they have adopted,

have caught the minds of young officers, and made them imagine that these ought to be general and exclusive. - The battalions, constantly drained of their best men, have been taught to undervalue themselves, almost to forget, that on their steadiness and efforts, the decision of events depends; and that light infantry - yagers - marksmen - riflemen, &c. &c. vanish before the solid movements of the line.

In all the armies of Europe, there is a great proportion of light infantry and cavalry; but they do not unnecessarily deviate from the general principles of the service, *nor are their peculiar modes adopted by the more important bodies of the line.* [Emphasis mine.]

They form separate corps, but still preserve the greatest order. Their skirmishers and dispersed men are loose, detached and numerous, according to circumstances; but a firm reserve always remains to rally upon, and to give support as may be wanted—their attacks are connected, and their movements the same as the rest of the line—their great province is to form advanced and rear guards; to patrol, to gain intelligence, occupy the out posts, to keep up communications, and by their vigilance and activity to cover the front, and ensure the tranquility of the army—they decide not, nor are they chiefly relied upon in battle, although on many such occasions they perform regular and eminent service....

Our present prevailing modes, are certainly not calculated either to attack or repulse a determined enemy, but only to annoy a timid and irregular one -they are not general, but were first adopted in local situations that may not soon recur. There is great danger in an *irregular* system, becoming the *established* one of a British army; and the most fatal consequences may one day ensue, if we do not return to a due sense of the necessity of solidity, effort, and mutual dependance, which it is the great business of discipline to inculcate and regulate.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Dundas, *Military Movements*, pp. 13,14.

It rapidly becomes apparent, especially when considering the other changes that had been made in the army during its tenure in America, that Dundas was trying to regain the solidity of the line units, not eliminate the light ones. The heavy and light troops had worked well together in the Seven Years' War in Germany, but as we have seen, the heavy troops devolved into a "flimsy" body in the Colonies. Perfectly appropriate against a "timid and irregular" enemy, the "thin red line" was not yet appropriate for Europe. Dundas only wanted to see the specialist light troops act not as *irregular* light troops but as *regular* light troops. Such regularity would allow their procedures to be uniform throughout the army. Ideally, they should act as line troops when gathered together, and be kept in reserve "ready to sally forth, and execute the part allotted them."

To Dundas, the army had gone too far in adapting to the colonial conditions and consequently must reorganize the heavy infantry on the traditional mode as epitomized by the Prussians in 1785. To Simcoe, the army should make its "irregular" light infantry "regular" by putting in regulation the customary practices of the late war. The great debate then was not a question of the continuance or dissolution of the light troops, but of priorities. Simcoe and Dundas were not exactly at odds with one another, in fact they were in some general agreement that the army needed to be regulated. The difference was that Simcoe wanted to concentrate the army's efforts on the legions and Dundas preferred to regain the solid regularity of the heavy troops that he felt was the most important part of the army. He agreed that the light corps had their place, but

as an adjunct, not an equal or superior to the heavy infantry and cavalry. Both wanted regulation to catch up with practice and to make the army ready for its next employment — which would probably be in Europe.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Houlding, *Fit for Service*, p. 165 "...means and techniques of training ...were learned, not from regulations, [but] ...from this accumulated service.... Custom consisted of experience ... against enemies as different in their tactics as the warriors of the North American tribes and the troopers of horse in the *maison du roi*."

## Chapter IV

The British army and its auxiliaries combined the methods of the little war with warfare in "the grand manner" in the campaigns in the Seven Years' War in Northwest Germany and in the American Revolution. By the end of the American Revolution the army had detoured so far from the close order tactics that some generals felt compelled to remind the men continually to use the bayonet and close for the attack when the ground permitted. Light tactics had altered the mindset of the engaged army to such an extent that a battalion in the field hardly resembled anything found in the basic drill manuals. In the colonies uniforms were altered and became completely unrecognizable from the original clothing warrants that had been set down in the name of the King.<sup>1</sup> The "pipe-clay" image of a fastidious, preening army was not to be found. Lord Augustus Howe's men in 1758 looked more like unkempt "roundheads" than denizens of the parade ground, and his younger brother William's men were much the same twenty years later.

If the army was markedly different from the popular image, as has been suggested here, then how might this affect some of the broader, more general interpretations which are based on the popular image? Fortunately, this thesis is not alone in questioning

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<sup>1</sup> Uniform regulations were issued in 1742, 1751, and 1768. These are readily available in Barthorp, *Infantry*, and Barthorp, *Cavalry*.

the validity of that image. This chapter is included to briefly touch on some of the recent historiography from which this thesis has heavily borrowed. The work in question involves very basic military history. It tells us little about battles or leaders but concentrates on important questions which have never been answered in full. With this new foundation laid, we should be encouraged to apply the results to the entire range of military history of the eighteenth century with an aim to understanding how new models might be constructed to understand more fully the traditional military history.

Who were the common soldiers? How were they trained? And in this age of the emerging state army, how were the armies created? The answers to these questions are all somewhat surprising. They are entirely at odds with many assumed answers that have heretofore formed the frames and canvases of the old portraits. It is well to take the new answers in turn and draw the lines that connect them with this thesis.

"Who were the common soldiers?" asked Sylvia Frey of the British army in America in her book, *The British Soldier in America: A Social History of Military Life in the Revolutionary Period*. James Kirby Martin and his co-author Mark Edward Lender sought similar answers in their *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic*. They wanted to "get beyond the deeply ingrained national mythology about the essence of the war effort, so neatly personified by the imagery of the embattled freehold farmer as the quintessential warrior of the Revolution." Although Frey's work is more directly related to this thesis, both being concerned with the

British army, *A Respectable Army* is included because we have seen in passing that during the American Revolution the Continental army moved in much the same direction as the British army.

Frey convincingly revised the portrait of the "Red Coats" in America which we have held ingrained in our conceptions of the Revolution. Our heritage and traditions presented this group as something it was not. The British soldier was not a brigand or denizen of the gutter and alleyway who could be utilized only after being brutalized by his officers. He was not of the lowest order, he was not a machine-stamped automation, he was not a desperate rogue. To be sure, there were men of these categories occasionally swept up by the man-hungry press, but Frey systematically proved "it is a misconception to suppose that such men were a majority in the British army.... Very few unwilling recruits saw conventional action...." Those that were unwilling usually found themselves "...confined in the Savoy Prison and from there sent as expeditiously as possible to foreign posts in the West Indies, or Minorca or Gibraltar, posts from which desertion was difficult."<sup>2</sup> Far and away, more men of the rank-and-file were:

"...a special kind of recruit: an urbanite either by birth or migration, of lower-class or lower-middle-class background, with a defined skill, the victim neither of crimps (civilians who forcibly recruited men for the army) nor of a press gang but of incipient

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<sup>2</sup> Sylvia Frey, *The British Soldier in America: A Social History of Military Life in the Revolutionary Period*, (hereafter, *British Soldier*), p. 6.

industrialization - of machines, of technology, of demographic change.

Similarly, after 1776 the Continental soldier, according to Martin and Lender, was not a landowning patriotic artisan or an "embattled freehold farmer." He was typically a man down on his luck who sought honest employment in the army and a chance for a better opportunity when the war ended, and he hoped for a bit of land in reward for his service. In short, the British soldier and his American foe were the same men who so often have become soldiers in other armies through history. He was a relatively solid citizen clinging desperately to his place on the lower rungs of the economic ladder. He was the man who had few alternatives for honest employment, with the army being one of them.

Because these soldiers were typically "solid citizens" and recent members of the lower middle class of society, not social outcasts as has been suggested in the past, a keystone of traditional eighteenth century military history has been undermined. Traditional interpretations placed soldiers of this period amongst society's dregs. As such, the army had to treat them almost as prisoners because they could not be trusted. The battalion became much like a mobile maximum security jail whose purpose was to prevent desertion or escape, and to herd its men into combat. The battalion had to be arranged in such a way that it could serve this dual function — mobile prison and combat unit.

It is probable that this dual role of the battalion has been lifted from the Prussian experience. They used vast numbers of unreliable



men. Prussian strong-arm methods of recruiting and such practices as Frederick's forcible enlistment of ten Saxon regiments into the Prussian army in 1756, or the recruitment of enemy deserters, resulted in heavy desertion in his battalions and make his preoccupation with desertion understandable.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, a good deal of the Prussian King's voluminous instructions to his officers concerned helpful advice on preventing desertion.<sup>4</sup> He directs: "...A non-commissioned officer or at least a lance-corporal must be placed in charge of each house where soldiers are billeted, [in cantonments] and the following day, when the battalion marches, it must leave all of its lodgings simultaneously. This is a good precaution against desertion."<sup>5</sup>

The methods employed by the Prussian battalions are partly accounted for by the problem with desertion. Their close order, three-rank line that many European armies sought to emulate had two functions in Prussia. It was first a truly awesome instrument of destructive firepower but it was also a very effective mobile "jail".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Duffy, *The Army of Frederick the Great*, p. 247.

<sup>4</sup> Luvaas, *Frederick the Great*, pp. 121-2. Frederick instructed, "One of the most essential duties of generals commanding armies or detachments is to prevent desertion." There follows a very detailed list of fourteen steps a general should take to minimize desertion. These steps sound almost like those required in a prison camp. For instance, desertion can be reduced "#2. By calling the roll several times daily....#11. By placing officers at both ends of a defile to force the soldiers to return to the ranks."

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>6</sup> I use the term "jail" for a convenient image. The battalion on line is reminiscent of a jail. The men are held in a confined space with commissioned officers, non-commissioned officers and trusted men serving as the jailers. Of course many men were "willing prisoners" and very loyal to the regiment and "Old Fritz" but many were not willing at all for reasons such as given above.

This Prussian institution had two parts. The part that firepower was derived from was the linear formation. A group of men armed with a short range weapon such as a flintlock musket achieved maximum firepower when stretched in a long line. The part that the "jail" was derived from was the closely arrayed ranks and files. Sergeants, armed with halberds, stood in the rear of the battalion to help encourage the men to do their duty and not desert or straggle.<sup>7</sup> This was more readily achieved in close order for each man had a place and if the unit was well maintained in orderly ranks, it was a simple matter to keep him there.

This thesis does not question the situation which required tight ranks and files in the Prussian army — that is well documented. It does contest the notion that both functions of the Prussian system, firepower and "jail" were emulated by other European armies. The raw ingredients that made up Frederick's battalions were different from the Anglo-German battalions that participated in the Seven Years' War and Burgoyne's expedition from Canada. They did not need the battalion to be a mobile jail. Unlike the Prussians, these units were mostly composed of volunteers.<sup>8</sup> Men deserted, that is certain, but not in the droves that left the army of Frederick the Great.

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<sup>7</sup> The close ranks also protected the battalion from being overrun by cavalry. This difference has been discussed elsewhere.

<sup>8</sup> For the Germans see Murray, "The Burgoyne Campaign", p. 16. "The German soldiers, however, were not pushed aboard the ships [to Canada]. They signed up voluntarily in most cases, as the bounties were liberal and the spirit of adventure prevailed then as now." For the British, see Frey, *British Soldier*.

If we accept the enlisted man as being less likely to desert, then the function of "jail" is not necessary. If that function is deleted, the only remaining function derived from the model Prussian battalion is the mass firepower achieved by stretching the musketeers out in line. But the first three chapters of this thesis demonstrate that the British armies in America were preoccupied with marksmanship as the means to improve firepower. The Prussian method was to pour out a rapid fire — not an accurate fire — to improve it. The British had improved on Frederick's system by stretching the lines out into an open two-rank formation and delivering mass firepower at marked targets. They could stretch the lines out because they did not fear desertion as much as the Prussians.

So, the army had some fairly reliable men. But how were they trained? How did their training relate to effectiveness? How did the army prepare for the little war? J. A. Houlding made training the focus of his book, *Fit for Service: The Training of the British Army 1715-1795*. In general, he found that peacetime training did not adequately prepare men for war. They were usually forced to learn their trade "on the job". Not only was there too little training, but because the army was scattered all over the Isles, with detachments often at company strength or less, large actions were impossible to simulate. This meant generals had no opportunity to practice with anything approaching the size forces that they would command in

battle.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the British, the annual Prussian maneuvers involved massive troop concentrations that made for effective peacetime training. The British officers attending as spectators were probably as envious of the sheer numbers of men available to the Prussian officers to practice with as they were of the precisely executed maneuvers.<sup>10</sup>

Officers of the eighteenth century were obliged to learn how to conduct themselves and their soldiers by studying the experiences of past heroes and reading general recommendations written by veterans of the recent wars. In addition to these, they could study their governments' official regulations which were published for the use of all officers. Or when a new topic needed special attention, and was not covered in the official publications, private publishers frequently issued books detailing their own suggestions.<sup>11</sup> These often met with considerable success. Many were even dedicated to the Crown or some senior officer.<sup>12</sup> Houlding found that the officer

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<sup>9</sup> Houlding, *Fit for Service*, p. 353. "The usual state of dispersal that characterized the normal routine of the duty of Great Britain; and only from late August were they in concentration."

<sup>10</sup> It was the 1785 Prussian exercise that so impressed Dundas. p. iii. Not everyone thought this great show to be enviable. Lord Cornwallis, who also attended, and fresh from his tenure in America remarked: 'Their manœuvres were such as the worst General in England would be hooted at for practising — two long lines coming up within six yards of one another and firing until they had no ammunition left; nothing could be more ridiculous.' Quoted in Fuller, *British Light Infantry*, p. 190, from *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis*, Vol. 1, p. 212.

<sup>11</sup> Houlding, *Fit for Service*, pp. 428-34. Lists over one hundred works that fall into this category.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, in *passim*.

corps was generally attentive to its craft and it made every effort to do its duty with the resources available.

During the middle half of the eighteenth century the army's regular officers numbered from a low of only 2,100 to a maximum of about 4,000. Yet the various private publications giving advice to officers were sold or subscribed to in comparatively large numbers. Totals such as "...939 subscribers,...several hundred,...nearly 500,...[and] several thousand copies between 1727 and 1762,..."<sup>13</sup> are typical sales figures for the better ones. Some private manuals were so well done and immediately useful, that senior officers commanded that their subalterns obtain a copy.<sup>14</sup>

One topic that was a popular source for the private publicist was the little war. Peter Paret comments: "between 1752 and 1800 it is possible to identify fifty titles devoted entirely to the little war."<sup>15</sup> Houlding agrees there was a devoted readership for that topic and says the "...best on the subject to appear in the eighteenth century — was Roger Stevenson's" *Military Instructions for Officers detached in the Field: Containing a scheme for forming A Corps of a Partisan...*(1770).<sup>16</sup> This was reprinted in Philadelphia in 1775 and a revised second edition came out in London in 1779.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99,171.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, in *passim*.

<sup>15</sup> Paret, "Colonial Experience", *BIHR*, p. 57, note 3. He cites J. G. Hoyer's *Geschichte der Kriegskunst* (Göttingen, 1799-1800) ii. 865-7, 1088-9 as a source for these titles.

<sup>16</sup> Houlding, *Fit for Service*, pp. 222-3. This is the one Burgoyne seems to have paraphrased. See Chapter Three.

Other works added to the bibliography advocating the study of the little war. Writing in 1768, Captain Bennett Cuthbertson felt the use of the light infantry would be a timely subject so he merely added a section devoted to them in his book, *A System for the Compleat Interior Management and Œconomy of a Battalion of Infantry*. "'Though [light companies are] not allowed on the establishment' at present, he felt sure it would be needed against the outbreak of another war."<sup>17</sup> These various tracts were used to great effect by some officers engaged in America. Captain Joseph Otway translated Count Turpin de Crisse's *An Essay on the Art of War*. It included material written for the practitioner of the little war. "John Forbes, James Wolfe, and Henri Bouquet all studied and recommended the work.... Forbes conducted his Fort Duquesne operations in 1758 according to the tactical system known as the 'protected advance', as laid down by Turpin"<sup>18</sup>

Much of the written material concerning the little war used by the British in America and Germany was borrowed from the French. After these wars the "...recent experience of light infantry, of ranging corps, and of the light legions both in the Americas and in Germany was preserved and disseminated in a number of publications after the 1763 peace." Major Robert Donkin's work of 1777 "gave to the tactics of the petite guerre a lengthy and very sound section...."<sup>19</sup> In

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 216,7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 201,2, n. 96.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 221-2. Quotes Major Robert Donkin, *Military Collections and remarks* (New York, 1777).

addition to theoretical study of the topic, there were "...narrative[s] of actual operations, ...carried out by regulars taught to fight as true light infantry," such as William Smith's *An Historical Account of the Expedition Against the Ohio Indians in MDCCXIV* (1766). This was the story of Bouquet's Royal Americans and was a "...fine description of the tactics of a highly trained light corps."<sup>20</sup>

To supplement inadequate peacetime exercises the men were trained in advanced elements of the drill once they reached the field. Braddock had tried to prepare his raw, untried troops at Fort Cumberland, Maryland prior to pushing on to Fort Duquesne. But he had too little time to get the men ready. The two regiments, the 44th and 48th, had been drawn from peacetime Irish cantonments. As was the usual practice, the regiments had been kept in reduced numbers with the expectation that the cadres would be brought to full strength by recruitment prior to engaging the enemy. These two regiments were built up with drafts from other regiments and new recruits from the Americans. Because national strategy required a rapid movement, the men were only in America three months before they were sent forth to do battle. They foundered in the ensuing disaster at the battle of the Monongahela — primarily due to their lack of training, not lack of appropriate methods.

The army performed better as it was able to gain more and more field training and brought forward some qualified officers.

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

This had been the pattern experienced over and over again. The battle of Dettingen in 1743, although a victory, was a disaster in the eyes of British drill masters. The men failed to remember anything of their training and fired at will at an enemy so distant that 'no Ennemy was at that time almost within Cannon Shot of some Corps which fired.'<sup>21</sup> Two years later, at Fontenoy, the men did far better, routing the *Gardes Francaises* with a single volley at close range and driving off repeated cavalry and infantry charges. Likewise, the troops were inexperienced and untried at Prespontans, 2 October 1745, the first engagement of the Jacobite rebellion. The battle itself lasted only about five minutes, long enough for the English to rout before the impetuously charging Highlanders. Again, the next campaign saw a different result; the men behaved well and stopped the wild charge of Highlanders at Culloden, allowing the rebellion to be put down. An important concept, and a key to this thesis is that army regulations were rarely representative of army practice. Regulations lagged behind practice in the British army; therefore, one cannot allow regulations and drill manuals to be the principal guide to tracking the training and tactics of the eighteenth century British army. For instance, the regulations for the army which fought the American wars are each one war behind what was actually done in the field. Regulations creating light infantry companies appeared in the 1770's, more than a decade after they were created in the Seven Years' War. The "thin red line", made famous in Lord Wellington's Peninsula Campaign, was well known in Howe's forces in the

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 350, quotes *Cumberland Papers*, Pt. 4, ii, fos. 4 and 57.



Revolutionary army, and possibly in Amherst's army twenty years before that! *Regulation lagged practice.*

Houlding puts it this way: "...Additional manoeuvres were taken from the army's store of 'customary' practice; and being customary, they were not specifically laid down in the regulations." Actual war conditions necessitated that temporary and rapid changes be adopted to meet a new threat presented by the enemy. Thus, the developments on the battlefields of the War of the Austrian Succession became the new regulations of the mid-1750s. And the 1764 regulations reflected the already customary practices of the Seven Years' War in Europe.

This situation was extreme at times. James Wolfe had trained his men in 1755 to use the platoon firing system only on review days, to satisfy the inspector general, but condemned the practice of platoon fire in the field. At all other times the men were to use alternate fire, which was considered the best approach at the time. Nine years later, in the 1764 manual, the platoon fire gave way to the alternate fire in regulation as well. We have already seen many cases of regulation lagging practice in the light infantry. The light infantry was not officially adopted until 1770-1771, but had been in use since 1755, when Wolfe used picquet companies in his makeshift alternate fire drill<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See Chapter One.

This is not a situation restricted to the British army. For instance, the Austrian infantry received a new drill manual in 1749 which gave them their first standardized system of drill and maneuvers. These regulations arrayed the troops in four ranks, but *Feldmarschall* Brown put them in three ranks at Lobositz in 1757 and that year the thinner order became universal for the Austrian army. The French, too, were in a constant state of flux, continually trying out new ideas presented by their numerous military thinkers. In France, there existed an on-going debate about the proper way to employ the troops, *ordre mince* or *ordre profond*.<sup>23</sup> Examples of each order were tested in the campaigns of the Seven Years' War.<sup>24</sup>

But entire wars need not pass before improvements were tried. The British army consistently performed poorly in the initial campaigns and improved through renewed field training and innovation. We may recall the difficulties of 1755 and 1775 in North America which were soon followed by great success. The failures are

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<sup>23</sup> In very simple terms, *Ordre Mince* was a system advocating the supremacy of firepower, and tended to thereby array the troops along thin lines. *Ordre Profond* was nearly the opposite. This order relied on the shock action of compact bodies of men acting in blocks with a narrow front, the intent being to pierce the enemy formations with weight of numbers. A hybrid of these two was the *Ordre Mixte*, which interspersed lines with attack columns, both covered and protected from enemy fire by many light troops dispersed to the front. For a more detailed description see Quimby, *Background of Napoleonic Warfare*.

<sup>24</sup> See Quimby, *Background of Napoleonic Warfare*, for a complete analysis of the developments in the French military philosophy during this period. The French employed the line and the column in the campaigns. Their technique changed almost as rapidly as their generals. Broglie actually predated Napoleon's *Ordre Mixte* when he sent out combined columns and lines, heavily screened by skirmishers in the campaigns. For Broglie, see pp. 94-6.

Such a situation is entirely possible in a war that was fought only by regular troops, fighting only according to the stereotype of the "European manner" in which armies fought only set-piece battles and sieges. Such an image, however, does not admit the existence of the hordes of irregular troops that filled the pages of Chapter Two with their exploits. Without the irregulars, warfare might have been relatively "civilized". It is because the stereotype extended the "Age of Reason" onto the battlefield that so little attention has been paid to the irregular soldier in Europe. He did not fit the mold of the European soldier of the period, and rather than change the mold to accommodate him, he was left out of it.

The irregulars are easier to dismiss because they were not, by definition, part of the regular establishment. Redlich's work on the "military enterpriser", the man who traded in soldiers, removes the irregular soldier from obscurity. He explains that in the wake of the state sponsored army, the military enterpriser turned to the only avenue of employment still open to him — recruiting, equipping, and leading irregular soldiers. "By the middle of the eighteenth century, with very few exceptions, only such officers were charged with old-style recruiting contracts as were called upon to raise units or corps of *light* troops."<sup>25</sup> He led the free corps, the irregular hussar regiments and independent legions we read of in Chapter Two.

By the 1750's and the Seven Years' War, the state usually recruited individuals and raised and equipped its own regiments;

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<sup>25</sup> Redlich, *Military Enterpriser*, p. 16.

only the free corps and other light troops were still acquired as complete bodies. This thesis does not attempt to explain why irregulars were still contracted for in complete units. It may have been the "most dishonourable stain" attached to the partisan that kept irregular corps a private concern. The stigma was certainly a lingering and potent force. As late as 1776 Simcoe had worried about it when he first considered leading partisans in the American Revolution.

Whatever the reason countries relied on the military enterpriser for their irregulars, there is little question that he was eager to pursue such a dishonorable profession. Probably two factors held the greatest interest to the leader of irregulars. First was a chance to become rich. The prince who hired him paid "...Lump sum payments to the contractors and payment of *Werbegeld* per man fully equipped (and mounted in a light cavalrist)."<sup>26</sup> The pay scale constantly rose with the demand for irregulars. "When the first Bavarian Hussars were recruited in 1688, the contractor received 21 fl. per man; in the 1740's, the same army paid 118 fl. and 18 kreuzers.... Austrian Baron Franz von Trenck received 80 fl. per Pandour.... In the Seven Years' War when Prussia organized one of her early free corps,... [she paid] 60 Thalers for a light infantrist."<sup>27</sup>

In addition to the fees collected by the military enterpriser for raising troops, looting and robbery provided bonus moneys. This

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

must have been lucrative indeed, for "...in 1741, Baron Franz von Trenck (1711-1749) raised 1,000 Pandours *on his own account* for Austrian service.... The men who in the 1740's raised light troops on their own account hoped to acquire wealth by way of booty, for even in the best disciplined contemporary army, light troops were great robbers."<sup>28</sup>

The irregular units cannot be left out of the history of the wars in the Old World. When they are, its battles become all too civilized. One might come to think the American Wars were somehow unique in their episodes of savagery. By drawing upon the work of Fritz Redlich, this thesis has been able to show how it was possible for the irregular aspects of the European Wars to be glossed over. The little war did not fit the mold of the Age of Reason and the emerging state army, it was closer to the image of the fanatical religious war of the 1600's.<sup>29</sup>

In concluding this thesis, it is important that we introduce some explanations for its arguments not being raised before. Why does the American public still maintain the image of the bumbling British soldier? Why do even professional historians still hold onto the three-rank, volley firing line?

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-9.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221, Redlich writes: "By the middle of the eighteenth century looting was becoming a privilege of the light troops.... There was a bad relapse during the Seven Years' War in Hanover, where the French commander [Pandour leader Franz von Trenck] handled *Kontributionen* in seventeenth-century fashion,..."

The answer to the first question is straightforward, as simple as Washington and the cherry tree. Any introductory college course on the American Revolution will undoubtedly include a few lessons about the mythos that grew up around the birth of this nation. Martin and Lender's book dispelled part of that when it debunked the "embattled freehold farmer" myth. It is quite likely that the British army was made a part of that mythos and has yet to escape. Of course, it contributed to the image — Braddock's defeat, without benefit of a careful study, seems to belittle the European military system. But thanks to Houlding, we know that debacle was the result of incomplete training and in no way should indict the whole system.

The answer concerning professional historians' views is more subtle. On the surface, the army did appear to be an unswerving, hidebound institution of conservatism. But too much recent study has ruined this thesis. If we exclude Redlich's *Military Enterpriser*, the eighteenth century battle was relatively "regular" and reminiscent of the image we held of the redcoat in America. Include Redlich's *Military Enterpriser*, and the rich history of the chasseur, jäger, and hussar overwhelms that image.

If we accept the "mobile-prison" image of the eighteenth century battalion, it would seem impossible for the British to develop a system that encouraged individual initiative. Deny that the Prussian and British social systems were alike and accept Frey's work on the British soldier in America, and the prison doors open.

If we take the drill manuals and regulations as representing the tactics, formations, clothing and equipment of the day, then the British army never really achieved true light infantry in the eighteenth century. But if we remember Houlding's *Fit for Service*, we must conclude that regulations lagged behind customary practice and never really reflected the true nature of light tactics in the eighteenth century.

To get the real answer, we must dig into the obscure and veiled reference, that could easily be missed if not specifically sought. This makes sense, for to borrow Greg Novak's example, how often would we expect to see such a common thing described? How often would a soldier of the recent past describe the details of a "K-Ration" in a letter home? Detailed descriptions would appear only rarely, such as when it was first introduced, when it was first experienced by someone unfamiliar with it, by someone who could exonerate some heinous crime by describing the thing, or by contrasting it with a new "T-Ration" for instance.<sup>30</sup>

The same is true for the British army of light infantry in America. The open order was rarely mentioned in memoirs and letters because it was so common. The instances I have found where it was given detailed consideration, fit the above situations. Amherst probably first introduced a version of the loose formation in his orders to the army in 1759. Riedesel carefully described what he called the "English Method" because it was rare that line battalions

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<sup>30</sup> Greg Novak, "Problems with First Person Accounts - 1", *The Seven Years War Association Newsletter*, Vol. 1, no. 4, June 1983, pp. 4, 5.

were trained in techniques found in the little war. Clinton explained Tarleton's loss at Cowpens as being a result of "that loose flimsy order", and Phillips, reminded that as he was lacking Germans, he had to have British form solid formations to support his front lines, and he took the opportunity to spell out in writing the "state-of-the-art" in British battlefield techniques.

The great debate in the 1780's between men like Simcoe and Dundas was not about keeping or removing the light infantry. It was not really a debate at all. Dundas reacted to the whole army's having gone too far in being swept up by the light concepts, having become too irregular, and too concerned with the little war at the expense of the conventional war. And Simcoe simply wanted to have his hard-won lessons remembered. King George III never denied the utility of light troops to Simcoe, he only denied his request to add new legions of horse, foot and artillery to the regular establishment.

With these obvious clues in mind, the small hints of the loose flimsy order become common in many manuscripts that concern tactics and formations. The constant reminders to use bayonets, the frequent references to marksmanship training, the alterations to uniforms and equipment all help color the details of a new image as to how the army operated in the field at mid-century. That loose flimsy order was a result of knitting together the formal techniques of the European set-piece battle, the *petite guerre* of Hungarian extraction and the little war of the American ranging company.



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